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Wittgenstein and Unity in Thought and World

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PhD Thesis

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Abstract

In order to make space for the possibility of falsity, Russell switches in 1906 from the idea of judgment that it is a dual relation to a fact to the theory that it is a multiple relation to the several, separate elements of a fact. In so doing, Wittgenstein however thinks, Russell comes to have us 'stop short of the fact with what we think' (*Philosophical Investigations* §95). Specifically, Russell's theory has us stop with what we think at the *collection* of the elements of the truth-making fact (the objective) and so short of the *unity* of those elements which is the objective itself. A principle ambition of Wittgenstein's Tractarian theory of judgment ('the picture theory') is to redress this Russellian shortfall whilst allowing still for the possibility of falsity. Its idea is this: that we can stop with what we mean in thought or language at nothing short of a *connection* of things (a *fact*) – even if when that connection does not exist – by connecting up in that very same way our representatives of those things.

The explicit insistence of Wittgenstein's that in a thought/proposition the elements are connected together *in the same way* as are the elements in the fact there represented is something many interpretations have struggled to embrace. Typically, such interpretations involve serious misunderstandings concerning the nature of fact-elements (objects), of proposition-elements (names), and of their (shared) manners of combination: Wittgenstein's objects are assimilated in logical role to those of Frege, and there is a failure properly to distinguish sign from symbol. This thesis offers an account of the atomic metaphysics and philosophy of language of the *Tractatus* in which is fully and centrally embraced the idea of an identity of modes of combination across the independently constituted domains of thought/language and reality.

Wittgenstein and Unity in Thought and World

Table of contents

List of abbreviations	page 4
Introduction	page 6
Chapter 1: Russell's theory of judgment	page 16
Appendix to chapter 1: Historical evidence	page 47
Chapter 2: Objects	page 53
Appendix 1 to chapter 2: Ramsey on Tractarian Objects	page 87
Appendix 2 to chapter 2: Tractatus 1.1	page 93
Appendix 3 to chapter 2: Complex and fact	page 96
Chapter 3: Symbols	page 109
Appendix to chapter 3: The realism of the Tractatus	page 152
Chapter 4: Unity in thought and the picture theory of meaning	page 158
Bibliography	page 178

List of Abbreviations

Works by Frege, G.

BLA	<i>The Basic Laws of Arithmetic</i> , tr. Furth, University of California Press 1964
CO	'On Concept and Object', tr. Geach, in Beaney 1997 pp. 181-193
CSB	'Comments on <i>Sinn</i> and <i>Bedeutung</i> ', tr. Long and White, in Beaney 1997 pp. 172-180
FA	<i>The Foundations of Arithmetic</i> tr. Austin, Blackwell 1980
FC	'Function and Concept', tr. Geach, in Beaney 1997 pp. 130-148
LM	'Letter to Marty', tr. Kaal, in Beaney 1997 pp. 79-83
PMC	<i>Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence</i> , tr. Kaal, Blackwell 1980

Works by Russell, B.

NT	'On the Nature of Truth', <i>Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society</i> 7 pp. 28-49
NTF	'On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood', in Russell 1910b pp. 147-159
OF	'On Functions', in Russell 1994 pp. 96-110
PLA	'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism', in Russell 1956 pp. 177-281
PM	<i>Principia Mathematica</i> volume 1, CUP 1925
POM	<i>The Principles of Mathematics</i> , Routledge 1992
PP	<i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> , OUP 1998
RA	'Analytic Realism', in Russell 1992c pp. 132-146
RUP	'On the Relations of Universals and Particulars', in Russell 1956 pp. 105-124
SLBR	<i>The Selected Letters of Bertrand Russell</i> volume 1, Penguin Press 1992
TK	<i>The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell</i> volume 7: <i>Theory of Knowledge, The 1913 Manuscript</i> , Allen & Unwin 1984

Works by Wittgenstein, L.

BB	<i>The Blue and Brown Books</i> , Blackwell 1969
CL	<i>Cambridge Letters</i> , Blackwell 1995
LO	<i>Letters to C. K. Ogden</i> , Blackwell 1973

LWL	<i>Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930-1932</i> , Rowman and Littlefield 1980
NB	<i>Notebooks 1914-1916</i> , tr. Anscombe, Blackwell 1961
PG	<i>Philosophical Grammar</i> , tr. Kenny, Blackwell 1974
PI	<i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , tr. Anscombe, Blackwell 1953
PPI	Typescript 220 (unpublished), called <i>Proto-Philosophical Investigations</i>
PR	<i>Philosophical Remarks</i> , tr. Hargreaves and White, Blackwell 1975
PTLP	<i>Prototractatus</i> , tr. Pears and McGuinness, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1971
SRLF	'Some Remarks on Logical Form', in Wittgenstein 1993 pp. 29-35
TLP	<i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i> , tr. Ogden, Routledge 1922, and tr. Pears and McGuinness, Routledge 1961
WWK	<i>Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle</i> , Blackwell 1979

Introduction

In discussion of an essay I had written on the connections between Wittgenstein's early and late conceptions of the practice of philosophy, my supervisor, Dr José Zalabardo, remarked that section 95 of *Philosophical Investigations* was one on which he found particular trouble in gaining a grip. My essay was not about to afford the missing handle, but the work I had done for it was sufficient to bring me to suspect, as the discussion proceeded, that a proper exposition of the section could shed great light on the formation of Wittgenstein's early ideas on the representation of reality in thought and language. This thesis is an attempt to clarify how the section indeed is important in this way, and to develop, in line, an account of those early ideas.

0.1

First we should see why I take the section to bear such promise.

Section 95 of the *Investigations* stands in the middle of a passage (sections 89-110) in which the later Wittgenstein looks critically back at his earlier conception of grammatical investigation (analysis), and at the ideas of grammar, of language, with which that conception is aligned. Coming in for particular criticism is an idea of language (or of thought) that it is something 'unique', something 'queer', something 'remarkable'. Best is to quote straightaway the relevant piece:

92. This finds expression in questions as to the *essence* of language, of propositions, of thought. ... We ask "*What is language?*", "*What is a proposition?*" ...

93. One person might say "A proposition is the most ordinary thing in the world" and another: "A proposition – that's something very queer!" – And the latter is unable simply to look and see how propositions really work. The forms that we use in expressing ourselves about propositions and thought stand in his way.

Why do we say a proposition is something remarkable? On the one hand, because of the enormous importance attaching to it. (And that is correct).

On the other hand this, together with a misunderstanding of the logic of language, seduces us into thinking that something extraordinary must be achieved by propositions. – A *misunderstanding* makes it look as if a proposition *did* something queer.

94. ‘A proposition is a queer thing!’ Here we have in germ the subliming of our whole account of logic. The tendency to assume a pure intermediary between the propositional *signs* and the facts. Or even to try to purify, to sublime, the signs themselves. – For our forms of expression prevent us in all sorts of ways from seeing that nothing out of the ordinary is involved, by sending us in pursuit of chimeras.

95. “Thought must be something unique”. When we say, *mean*, that something is the case, we do not stop with what we mean anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: *such and such—is—thus and so*. But this paradox (which has the form of a truism) can also be expressed in this way: we can *think* what is not the case.¹

96. Other illusions come from various quarters to attach themselves to the special one spoken of here. Thought, language, now appear to us as the unique correlate, picture of the world.

The outline of my reading of this is as follows: The early Wittgenstein was subject to a misunderstanding which made it seem to him that a thought (or proposition) *does* something special. Further, it appeared that in order to achieve this special feat a thought (or proposition) must *be* something special. And with this it appeared more particularly, on the addition of various other illusions, that what a thought (or proposition) must be, to achieve the queer feat in question, is a ‘unique correlate, picture of the world’.

Before expanding, I can justify two key assertions. First is the interchangeability in the matter to hand of thought and language. The same queer feat is to be achieved by both thought and language, and both must be queer things to achieve it. There is no step taken ‘in

¹ The translation given here of section 95 differs from Anscombe’s rather free translation; see chapter 4 below for details.

the problem' when we change from 'A proposition is a queer thing' (PI 94) to 'Thought must be something unique' (PI 95), rather: one and the same concern applies to both thought and language. Such is suggested merely by the rhetorical device of having an interlocutor's 'Thought must be something unique' head a paragraph immediately subsequent to a paragraph headed by an interlocutor's 'A proposition is a queer thing' in which no herald has been given of, or place prepared for, an idea of thought: the change is not a move to thought but a switch to thought. But it is also quite evident from elsewhere. The passage under examination begins: 'This finds expression in questions as to the *essence* of language, of propositions, of thought', and ends: 'Thought, language, now appear to us as the unique correlate, picture of the world'. In between it is suggested that 'the forms that we use in expressing ourselves about propositions and thought' are (partly) responsible for the postulation of queerness. And (externally) in section 110 Wittgenstein writes: "'Language (or thought) is something unique" – this proves to be a superstition'.

Second, I claim that the passage cited is autobiographical, that the 'us' in sections 93, 94 and 96 is the early Wittgenstein. This I take to be obvious. The entirety of sections 89 to 110 is directed by Wittgenstein at his earlier self; it is a sustained critique of his Tractarian conception of logic as something sublime beginning: 'For there seemed to pertain to logic a peculiar depth ...' (PI 89) and concluding: 'We see that what we call "proposition" and "language" has not the formal unity that I imagined ...' (PI 108). Throughout, references are made to central aspects of the Tractarian conception of logic (e.g. the determinacy of sense (PI 99, TLP 3.23)), and at one point the *Tractatus* is explicitly mentioned (PI 97). More locally, we can note the peculiarly Tractarian sounding ideas remarked in sections 94 and 96: In section 94 talk is given of 'The tendency to assume a pure intermediary between the propositional *signs* and the facts. Or even to try to purify, to sublime, the signs themselves' (compare this with: 'a proposition is a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world' (TLP 3.12)). And in section 96 we are told that, under the special illusion that a thought, a proposition, does something queer, it appears now 'to us' that thought, language, are the 'unique correlate, picture of the world'. It would be absurd to suggest that Wittgenstein is interested here in a mistake which might perhaps lead someone to an idea of language as picturing the world, only not a mistake which led him to his idea of language as picturing the world.

And with this said, we can see the importance of the passage. The illusion that thought (language) must do something queer is, I read the passage as clearly saying, a (if not *the*) prime motivation for the picture theory of meaning of the Tractatus. The queer thing that a proposition (thought) is, for the early Wittgenstein, is a picture of reality (TLP 4.01), and this must be so, he imagined, in order that propositions (thoughts) may achieve a certain queer feat.

But what queer feat? Well this is not, I think, made explicit to us in the passage cited above. We are, however, helped out there to some extent. Where in section 94, 'A proposition is a queer thing' is followed by a quick account of the likely philosophical precipitation of such an idea, in section 95 'Thought must be something unique' is followed by an equally quick account of its philosophical motivation. There is, admittedly, no 'For...' kicking off the second sentence of section 95, but I take it that that is, nonetheless, the obvious sense of the paragraph. I don't know quite how to argue for this, other than to say that that reading is entirely natural and, so far as I can imagine, without competitor. What is presented after the assertion: 'Thought must be something unique', is an account of the philosophical considerations from which it issues. Wittgenstein writes: 'When we say, *mean*, that something is the case, we do not stop with what we mean anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: *such and such—is—thus and so*' (PI 95). We do not stop with what we think anywhere short of, at anything less than, the fact: it is this, I take it, which marks thought's unique achievement.

Thus it is suggested: in our not stopping anywhere short of the fact with what we mean (with what we think/say/believe etc.) it must be, the early Wittgenstein thinks, that a thought/proposition achieve something unique. And to accomplish this unique feat, Wittgenstein then considers, what a thought/proposition must be is a 'unique correlate, picture of reality' (PI 96). To try to understand this is the major task of the work to come.²

0.2

Here is not the place to develop in detail what is meant by the 'not stopping anywhere short

² Of course, the meat of this thesis will not stand, for its value, solely on the reading just given of PI 92-96; no one reading of one passage can carry a whole thesis of weight. But neither, I take it, can the reading be ignored: it is (it seems to me) the natural reading of a part of what is, by far, the later Wittgenstein's most important discussion of his earlier philosophy of language. Sections 89-110 of the

of the fact' of PI 95, though a few quick remarks can be made to give some idea of the notion. And some outline, too, to the thesis.

We can begin by commenting on the connection made in PI 95 between 'not stopping anywhere short of the fact' and the possibility of falsity. The 'paradox' (with the form of a truism) of our not stopping with what we mean anywhere short of the fact can also, we are told, 'be expressed in this way: we can *think* what is not the case'. This is, certainly, Wittgenstein at his more cryptic. But it is perhaps not entirely baffling: even in the absence of clarity regarding what is meant by 'not stopping short of the fact', we can (perhaps) sense how some kind of a paradox involving falsity might indeed be in the offing here. How, a problem might perhaps be set out, can we not stop with what we think anywhere short of a fact, whilst still allowing for the possibility that that fact may not exist?

Something which comes naturally to mind on considering the requirement on a thought that it allow for the possibility of its falsity – especially in the context of the development of the *Tractatus* – is Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment. For in 1910 Russell writes:

If I judge (say) that Charles I died on the scaffold, is that a relation between me and a single 'fact', namely, Charles I's death on the scaffold, or 'that Charles I died on the scaffold', or is it a relation between me and Charles I and dying and the scaffold? We shall find that the possibility of false judgments compels us to adopt the latter view. (NTF p150)

In order to make space for the possibility of falsity, Russell rejects the idea that thought is a dual relation between a subject and a fact, preferring instead the suggestion that a fact is a complex and that thought is a multiple relation between a subject and the several elements of a fact. I shall suggest that this move is, as might be suspected, wholly pertinent to Wittgenstein's autobiography of PI 93-96.

Famously, Wittgenstein remarked of Russell's multiple relation theory that it permits 'nonsense judgments'; I shall argue in chapter 1 below that this permission was (for Wittgenstein) symptomatic of the failing in Russell's theory that, in moving as it does to

Investigations were, as the rest of the beginning of the book, carefully worked and reworked into something with which Wittgenstein was as happy (more or less) as he could be.

making space for the possibility of falsity, it has us stop short of the fact with what we judge. As a thought is not a dual relation between a subject and a fact but a multiple relation between a subject and the elements of the fact, so accordingly what is presented by a thought is not a fact but a mere collection of uncombined elements – something less than, short of, the fact. We stop with what we think, under Russell's theory, at a set of elements and so short of the *unity* of elements which is the fact. And telling, for Wittgenstein, of this uncombinedness of the elements as presented by a thought is that Russell cannot even ensure that those elements are themselves *combinable*, that the thought not be nonsensical. (There can be no such thing, we insist, as a thought's presenting as combined what are logically uncombinable in reality.)

Russell is trapped in a dilemma here (he must either have us stop short of the fact with what we think or have thoughts entail their own truth) from which, I shall argue, the picture theory is Wittgenstein's escape. The picture theory is Wittgenstein's theory of judgment under which it is the case that thoughts both allow for the possibility of their own falsity and are such that we do not stop with what we think at anything less than (anywhere short of) the fact. Before outlining how, however, let's make a textual connection. In addition to Russell's theory of judgment, something else which sprang to mind on puzzling over *Philosophical Investigations* 95 was a certain rather enigmatic remark from the *Tractatus* – section 2.1511:

2.13 In a picture objects have the elements of the picture corresponding to them.

2.131 In a picture the elements of the picture are the representatives of objects.

2.14 What constitutes a picture is that its elements are related to one another in a determinate way.

2.141 A picture is a fact.

2.15 The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way

Let us call this connexion of its elements the structure of the picture, and let us call the possibility of this structure the pictorial form of the picture.

2.151 Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture.

2.1511 *That* is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches up to it [es reicht bis zu ihr].³

Is this matter of a picture's reaching up to reality connected with the idea from *Philosophical Investigations* 95 of our not stopping short of the fact? Indeed, could this 'reaching up to reality' be, or at least account for, the unique achievement of a proposition/thought in which we manage not to stop with what we mean at anything less than the fact? It seemed very possible, and I shall suggest that it indeed is.

If so, however, the following becomes most important: that the reaching up to reality of a picture consists in the possibility that things are related to one another *in the same way* as the elements of the picture. It is with the possibility that the things a picture's (a proposition's (TLP 4.01)) elements represent are related *in the same way* as are those elements themselves that we do not stop short of the fact with what we mean.

I italicise the 'in the same way' here, for commentators of the *Tractatus* have standardly felt this to be a condition which Wittgenstein cannot maintain. There must be, as the text proceeds, an implicit relaxation in the idea of a picture, a tacit move from 'homogeneous' or 'naturalistic' pictures to 'heterogeneous' or 'non-naturalistic' pictures. A homogeneous picture, hung on the wall, may represent that two things are next to each other by having their representatives stand next to each other; a heterogeneous picture, by contrast, might represent that two things are next to each other by having their representatives stand on either side of the sign 'is next to'. Surely Wittgenstein can't insist, generally, that a proposition represent that things are related *in the same way* as are their names in the proposition; his idea must be – surely – that things are represented as related in a way *corresponding to* the way the names are related in the proposition. That 'a' and 'b' stand on either side of an 'R' – that proposition – says that aRb (whatever that may be), not that a and b stand on either side of an 'R'.

³ Pears and McGuinness translate the last phrase here as: 'it reaches right out to it'; I have preferred Ogden's 'it reaches up to it'. I can see no warrant in the German for 'right out' rather than merely 'out' (or 'up'). More, Wittgenstein gives tacit approval to Ogden's translation in choosing not to comment on it in their correspondence (LO). In *Some Remarks on Logical Form* Wittgenstein unhesitatingly cites Ogden's translation of section 2.1511 as words of his own (SRLF p34).

This I take to be the most dreadful mistake, indicative, I shall argue, of fundamental misunderstandings concerning the natures of fact-elements (objects), proposition-elements (names) and their *shared* manners of combination. The picture theory of representation is just this: that in a representation the elements go proxy for things, representing that those things are related as are the elements in the representation. And it is to hold for propositions written on blackboards as much as for pictures hung on walls. In the Notebooks, Wittgenstein writes:

Then in order for a proposition to present an atomic fact it is only necessary for its component parts to represent those of the atomic fact and for the former to stand in a connexion which is possible for the latter. (NB p27)

What he does not write is: '... and for the former to stand in a connexion corresponding to a connexion possible for the latter'.

To try to 'relax' the theory as mooted when we move to propositions (heterogeneous pictures!) is simply to throw the theory away. Particularly, it is to throw away that in which consists a picture's reaching up to reality. And to do that, under my suggestion, will be to throw away that aspect of Wittgenstein's idea of a proposition in which they achieve just that feat which pressed him to think of propositions as pictures in the first place! In order that we not stop, with what we mean, anywhere short of the fact, propositions must (it seemed) achieve something unique, and it is in an identity of manner of combination between the elements of a proposition and those of the fact it represents that this unique feat is accomplished. The idea that proposition-elements combine in the same way as do the elements of the facts they represent will be the centre-piece of the account of the picture theory to be developed in this thesis.

Taking this in hand, we can return very briefly to Russell who, despite being considerably put out by Wittgenstein's criticisms of his theory, did nonetheless make some attempt to patch things up. Specifically, he mooted the possibility that within a thought the elements of the represented fact are in some way combined together (the subordinate relation appears in the thought not as a term but as, somehow, a verb going between the other elements (PLA p225)), only not, on pain of the impossibility of falsity, in that way which constitutes the

thought's truth. But whilst such a manoeuvre could perhaps be developed to prevent nonsense judgments, the (further) failing of which the possibility of nonsense judgments was symptomatic will remain unresolved: whatever way it is in which the fact-elements are connected in the thought, if it is not that same way in which they are connected in the fact then we will still fail to arrive, with what we think, at the very fact itself – we will arrive, instead, at some other connection of the same objects.

And perhaps now we can begin indistinctly to see how Wittgenstein exits this dilemma, how a proposition's (thought's) being a picture allows that we stop with what we mean nowhere short of a fact. The key move here (the key break from Russell) is the suggestion that a proposition (thought) contains neither the represented fact nor its elements, but rather representatives of those elements. The possibility of representation is based, for the early Wittgenstein, on the principle that in a thought/proposition things may stand for entities other than themselves (TLP 4.0312). For with this in place it can now be insisted that the thought elements be connected in just that way as are the elements they stand for when the thought is true. This then is the picture theory: We may stop with what we mean in thought or language at nothing less than a *connection* of things (a *fact*) – even when that connection does not exist – by connecting in that same way our representatives of those things.

0.3

The aim of this thesis does not exceed that of providing an account of certain motivations for and core elements of the Tractarian atomic metaphysics and philosophy of language. Interpretation will at times be given of work of Wittgenstein's from the post-1929 period, but the interest at such points will be solely in the light shed backwards from there onto the pre-1929 work. More, there will not be lengthy discussion of secondary literature. Besides those of Wittgenstein himself, writings only of Frege, Russell and Ramsey will come in for detailed examination. The hope throughout is that the primary texts can be seen to speak for themselves; citation therefrom will be extensive.

It may be useful briefly to indicate the ordered contents of the thesis.

First, in chapter 1: Russell's theory of judgment, Russell's ideas of facts and their representation are considered. An interpretation is developed of Wittgenstein's criticisms of

Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment on which their point is to demonstrate a failure on Russell's part to meet a requirement of unity in thought.

In an appendix I adduce certain historical data in support of the chapter's key contentions.

Chapter 2: Objects, connects the Tractarian idea of an object with the logical ontologies of both Frege and Russell. It is argued that as Frege has a variety of logical types of entity (objects and the various types of concepts), so Wittgenstein's entities (his 'objects') may be of various forms. Unlike Frege, however, Wittgenstein insists that the ontological variety is not available a priori (i.e. before the performance of analyses), and more that *all* entities are, in a certain sense, incomplete. What is complete in the Tractatus is a fact.

There are three appendices to this chapter: one on Ramsey's understanding of Tractarian objects, one a common misunderstanding of Tractatus 1.1, and a third on the identification in the Tractatus of complex and atomic fact.

It is argued in the following chapter 3: Symbols, that the Tractatus is involved with a level of language, the level of symbols, at which is found more than mere marks or sounds (signs), but at which content, meaning, is not in view. Simple symbols are names; complete symbols are propositions; elementary propositions consist of names combined together in ways identical to those in which objects combine to form atomic facts.

An appendix to this third chapter discusses how one might take the Tractatus to propose a realist metaphysic.

Chapter 4: Unity in thought and the picture theory of meaning, ties together the work of the previous three chapters. The picture theory of representation is seen to constitute a replacement, in the context of the correspondence theory of truth, for Russell's failed theory of judgment.

0.4

Thanks is due to Jon Barton, Tim Storer and Gabriel Lakeman for discussions (formal and informal) of ideas present in this work. And particularly, I thank my two supervisors, Dr José Zalabardo and Dr Jerome Valberg.

Chapter 1

Russell's theory of judgment

In May 1913 Wittgenstein made an objection to Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment the result of which was Russell's abandonment of his major work *Theory of Knowledge*. The objection was given first verbally and then in a letter:

I can now express my objection to your theory of judgment exactly: I believe it is obvious that, from the prop ' A judges that (say) a is in the Rel R to b ', if correctly analysed, the prop ' $aRb \vee \sim aRb$ ' must follow directly *without the use of any other premiss*. This condition is not fulfilled by your theory.
(Wittgenstein to Russell, June 1913, CL p29)

Russell was devastated:

All that has gone wrong with me lately comes from Wittgenstein's attack on my work – I have only just realised this. It was very difficult to be honest about it, as it makes a large part of the book I meant to write impossible for years to come probably. (Russell to Morrell, 19 June 1913; SLBR p462)

I am very sorry to hear that my objection to your theory of judgment paralyses you, I think it can only be removed by a correct theory of propositions. (Wittgenstein to Russell, 22 July 1913; CL p33)

In the language and theories of *Principia Mathematica* ' $aRb \vee \sim aRb$ ' will be a true proposition just in case ' aRb ' is significant. (See PM p171: '... if a is any argument for which " ϕa " is significant, *i.e.* for which we have $\phi a \vee \sim \phi a$, then ...'.) Thus Wittgenstein's objection, we can briefly note, is that Russell's theory allows for 'insignificant judgments' (allows, that is, for 'judgments that p ' where ' p ' is (what Russell would understand in a certain way as) insignificant). The point is made more plainly in *Notes on Logic* (September 1913):

Every right theory of judgment must make it impossible for me to judge that “this table penholders the book” (Russell’s theory does not satisfy this requirement). (NB p96)

And again in the Tractatus:

The correct explanation of the form of the proposition. ‘A makes the judgment p’ must show that it is impossible for a judgment to be a piece of nonsense. (Russell’s theory does not satisfy this requirement.) (TLP 5.5422)

The suggestion of chapters to come will be that the picture theory is Wittgenstein’s ‘correct theory of propositions’ which ‘removes the objection’ of nonsense judgments. For this chapter, I want to explore the objection itself. It will be my contention that Wittgenstein’s point is very simple (technically, at least). Russell’s theory of judgment is subject, Wittgenstein thinks, to a basic requirement which we might call the requirement of unity in thought; what Wittgenstein’s complaint about nonsense judgments shows (and was intended to show) is that Russell’s theory does not meet this requirement.

1.1

To begin, we should go very quickly through the basic Russellian metaphysics of 1903-1913 (from *The Principles of Mathematics* to *Theory of Knowledge*): Occurring in Russell’s universe over this period are simples and also complexes; a complex being not simple in that it has parts (constituents):

We will give the name of “a *complex*” to any such object as “*a* in the relation *R* to *b*” or “*a* having the quality *q*” or “*a* and *b* and *c* standing in the relation *S*.” Broadly speaking, a *complex* is anything which occurs in the universe and is not simple. (PM p44)

A “complex” is anything analysable, anything which has *constituents*. (TK p79)

If we take some particular dual complex xRy , this has three constituents, *x*, *R*, and *y*. (TK p114)

For example, “A differs from B” or “A’s difference from B,” is a complex of which the parts are A and B and difference. (POM p139)

The parts (constituents, components) of a complex are not, however, all parts in the same way. Russell has a theory of the constitution of complexes under which not all components of a complex figure there in the same manner. This is as follows: An entity may appear in a complex either as a term or as a relation; in any (atomic) complex, one entity appears as a relation and all the others as terms; if there are n entities appearing as terms in a complex, then the entity appearing as a relation appears there as an n -ary relation. More: a complex consists of a variety of *self-standing units* – the entities occurring as terms – *connected up* by the entity occurring as relation. To occur as a term in a complex is to occur in the world as a self-standing entity; to occur as a relation in a complex is to go between and actually relate together the various terms.

This theory then delivers for Russell the following fundamental logical kinds of entities: *term*, an entity which may feature as a term in a complex, and *n-ary relation*, an entity which may feature as an n -ary relation in a complex. The entity which appears as relation in an atomic complex is called the relating relation of that complex; a unary relation we call a predicate; something figuring as the sole term in a complex we call the subject of the complex’s predicate; relations of any order we call universals; terms which are not universals we call particulars.

Finally, Russell adds to this the ‘theory’ that both universals and complexes may occur as terms within complexes. Everything, simple and complex, is a term.⁴

1.2

Against the background of this metaphysics of simples and complexes, constant from 1903 to 1913 (and beyond), Russell holds constant also that there is a universal: *judgment*. What is not held constant, however, is the nature of this universal.

⁴ The account of this section is, as indicated, *very* brief; much more on the Russellian metaphysics in chapter 2.

In 1903 in *The Principles of Mathematics*, Russell holds that judgment is a dual relation. Particularly, he holds there that S's judgment that p is a complex in which the universal *judgment* relates the subject S to the proposition p. What, though, is a proposition? Well, a proposition, we are told, is itself a complex. But a complex of what? Here the response may surprise: the proposition that Jack loves Jill is, precisely, the complex composed of love (the universal) and Jack and Jill (the people) in which the first relates the second to the third (the complex 'Jack loving Jill'). S's judgment that Jack loves Jill is thus a complex in which S is related by judgment to the (sub-)complex in which Jack is related by love to Jill.

This early theory of judgment was, however, soon found to be unsatisfactory on the grounds that it did not allow for an account of the difference between a judgment's truth and its falsity. The truth or falsity of a judgment would reside, on the dual relation view, in the truth or falsity of the proposition judged: but in what would that then consist? No answer was forthcoming. It would have to be taken, Russell came to recognise, as 'an ultimate and not further explicable fact' (NTF p152) that certain propositions (the complex 'Jack loving Jill', say) are true and certain others (the complex 'Jack hating Jill') false. This, naturally, Russell found repulsive, and became strongly attracted to the idea that truth, rather than being a basic feature of complexes, is instead constituted by the *existence* of complexes. S's judgment that Jack loves Jill is true, the thought becomes, not when the complex 'Jack loving Jill' is – brutally – true, but rather when there exists such a complex as 'Jack loving Jill'. What, though, is the judgment then to be?

Famously, Russell's idea at this point is that a judgment is not, as he formerly held, a dual relation between a subject and a complex but rather a *multiple relation* between a subject and the several *components* of a complex:

The theory of judgment which I am advocating is, that judgment is not a dual relation of the mind to a single objective, but a multiple relation to the various other terms with which the judgment is concerned. Thus if I judge that A loves B, that is not a relation of me to 'A's love for B', but a relation between me and A and love and B. (NTF p155)

And the truth of such a judgment we may now begin to define as follows:

Every judgement is a relation of a mind to several objects, one of which is a relation; the judgement is *true* when the relation which is one of the objects relates the other objects, otherwise it is false. Thus in the above illustration, love, which is a relation, is one of the objects of the judgement, and the judgement is true if love relates A and B. (NTF p156)

We can write this slightly more formally. Following Russell let's use the symbol ' $R(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ ' to denote a complex in which x_1, \dots, x_n stand as terms and R as relating relation. And then characterise the movement from *The Principles of Mathematics* dual relation view of judgment to the multiple relation theory as the movement from considering S's belief that, say, a stands in R to b to be the complex $B(S, R(a, b))$, to considering it to be the complex $B(S, R, a, b)$. And the constitution of the truth of S's belief moves, in step, from the truth of the complex $R(a, b)$ to the existence of the complex $R(a, b)$. (In the context of the multiple relation theory we shall call S the belief's subject, R, a and b the beliefs objects, R the belief's object relation, a and b the belief's object terms, and $R(a, b)$ the belief's objective.)

This theory is, however, beset by a series of difficulties. They relate and indeed lead up to Wittgenstein's 'nonsense judgment' objection, and so we shall spend a short while on their inspection.

1.3

We can rather quickly find the very simple definition of truth given just above to be unsatisfactory. It was said that 'the judgment [that A loves B] is true if love relates A and B' (NTF p156). But love can relate A and B in two different ways: A can love B (love can relate A to B) or B can love A (love can relate B to A). Under the mooted definition, then, the judgment that A loves B will be made true by the existence of the complex 'B's love for A' (i.e. by B's loving A). The distinction on which this complaint runs is not something of which Russell is unaware. From the very beginning his theories of complexes had incorporated an idea of 'the sense of a (relating) relation':

A relational proposition may be symbolized by aRb , where R is the relation and a and b are the terms; and aRb will then always, provided a and b are not identical, denote a different proposition from bRa . That is to say, it is characteristic of a relation of two terms that it proceeds, so to speak, *from one*

to the other. This is what may be called the *sense* of the relation, and is, as we shall find, the source of order and series. (POM p95)

Dual relating relations proceed, 'so to speak', from one of their terms to the other; if we switch the two related terms for each other in a dual complex (a dual relational proposition in *The Principles of Mathematics*) we will obtain a distinct complex in which the relation goes the other way (i.e. from what was towards and towards what was from). How then are these two distinct complexes to be distinguished in a judgment? Well in 1910 in *On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood* we find:

Let us take the judgment 'A loves B'. This consists of a relation of the person judging to A and love and B, i.e. to the two terms A and B and the relation 'love'. But the judgment is not the same as the judgment 'B loves A'; thus the relation must not be abstractly before the mind, but must be before it as proceeding from A to B rather than from B to A. The 'corresponding' complex object which is required to make our judgment true consists of A related to B by the relation which was before us in our judgment. We may distinguish two 'senses' of a relation according as it goes from A to B or from B to A. Then the relation as it enters into the judgment must have a 'sense', and in the corresponding complex it must have the same 'sense'. Thus the judgment that two terms have a certain relation R is a relation of the mind to the two terms and the relation R with the appropriate sense: the 'corresponding' complex consists of the two terms related by the relation R with the same sense. (NTF p158)

Russell's suggestion, then, is this: Within the belief complex $B(S, R, a, b)$, R – the object relation – has a sense which goes (say) from a to b, and the truth maker for the belief is accordingly the complex in which R goes (as relating relation, now) in the same way from a to b (and not from b to a). In a judgment, the object relation is not 'abstractly before the mind, but must be before it as proceeding' between the object terms.

This idea is not, however, terribly comfortable. The idea of sense, of going from-to, which we saw just above was one which pertained not to the terms of a complex but to its relating relation. Love, in the complex 'A's love for B' proceeds from A to B; neither A nor B there

But it is not clear then, that Russell can help himself to this particular piece of cake.

In fact it should be clear that he cannot. We can recall from section 1.1 of this chapter above that whilst a complex's relating relation actually relates the terms, what is a term in a complex stands there as a self-contained unit. Thus whilst the idea seems available that the relating relation 'proceed in a certain way amongst the terms', what room could there be for the idea that a term of a complex, such as R in $B(S, R, a, b)$, might occur there as proceeding somehow between other terms? What is standing as an independent, self-contained unit is not, surely, proceeding.

Russell comes quickly to recognise that this must indeed be so. But before looking at the alternative he moves next to offer, let's assert two things: First that we are touching here a problem much deeper than a mere inconvenience stemming from the fact that two distinct complexes can sometimes be constructed out of the same components. What is deeply problematic here, we shall see, applies equally in the case of beliefs in complexes such as 'A's being red' where there is only one complex constructible from the components given in the belief. (Predicates, as opposed to dual or triple etc. relations, do not have 'multifold senses', but that does not mean that beliefs in subject-predicate complexes escape what is (really) at issue here.) And second that the nature of the deep problem is visible in Russell's desire to suggest that the object relation 'must not be abstractly before the mind, but must be before it as proceeding from A to B '.

1.4

In correspondence with G. F. Stout, Russell wrote:

As regards the sense of the relation r in judging ArB , you make a point which had already occurred to me. But it is met with a slight re-wording of the account of sense in judgment, and this re-wording is in any case necessary to my theory. There must never, so I now perceive, be any relation having sense in a complex except the relating relation of that complex; hence, in the act of judging ArB , the sense must be confined to judging, and must not appear in the r . But judging being a multiple relation, its sense is not merely

twofold like that of a dual relation, and the judging alone may arrange the terms in the order Mind, *A*, *r*, *B*, as opposed to Mind, *B*, *r*, *A*. This has the same effect as if *r* had a sense in the judgment, and gives all that one wants without being obnoxious to your objections. (Cited in Stout (1911) p203)

And in *The Problems of Philosophy* we find

When an act of believing occurs, there is a complex, in which ‘believing’ is the uniting relation, and subject and objects are arranged in a certain order by the ‘sense’ of the relation of believing. Among the objects, as we saw in considering ‘Othello believes Desdemona loves Cassio’, one must be a relation – in this instance the relation ‘loving’. But this relation, as it occurs in the act of believing, is not the relation which creates the unity of the complex whole consisting of the subject and the objects. The relation ‘loving’, as it occurs in the act of believing, is one of the objects – it is a brick in the structure, not the cement. The cement is the relation ‘believing’. When the belief is *true*, there is another complex unity, in which the relation which was one of the objects of the belief relates the other objects. Thus, e.g., if Othello believes *truly* that Desdemona loves Cassio, then there is a complex unity, ‘Desdemona’s love for Cassio’, which is composed exclusively of the *objects* of the belief, in the same order as they had in the belief, with the relation which was one of the objects occurring now as the cement that binds together the other objects of the belief. (PP p74)

So the plan now is to use the sense not of the object relation but of the belief relation itself to remove the flaw in the original, unsophisticated definition of truth. That sense needed already to be in play (surely) to distinguish between $B(S, a, \text{love}, b)$ and $B(a, S, \text{love}, b)$, to distinguish, that is, between the subject of the belief and its several objects, so let’s put it (the thought now is) to the further work (at least) of distinguishing, amongst the object terms of, say, a belief in a dual complex, between object referent and object relatum. But let’s look again rather more closely at this plan:

Among the objects [of a belief], as we saw in considering ‘Othello believes Desdemona loves Cassio’, one must be a relation – in this instance the

relation 'loving'. ... [I]f Othello believes *truly* that Desdemona loves Cassio, then there is a complex unity, 'Desdemona's love for Cassio', which is composed exclusively of the *objects* of the belief, in the same order as they had in the belief. (PP p74)

This, I take it, should be somewhat puzzling. Russell is explicit: The objects of Othello's belief are Desdemona, love and Cassio; in that belief they appear in a certain order; the complex which makes Othello's belief true is that complex composed of those three objects in the same order in which they figure in the belief. But that, surely, can't be right. The ordering achieved by the relating relation of a complex is an ordering, surely, only of the entities appearing as terms in that complex: the relating relation itself is not put there (by itself!) in an order with the terms. The relating relation relates the terms in a certain order. (Whilst one might naively suggest that in $R(a, b)$ the constituents have the order a, R, b (R goes from a to b , and so lies in between them!), what ordering of S, a, b , and c is to be found in the complex $S(a, b, c)$?) What can Russell mean, then, by saying that what composes the complex 'Desdemona's love for Cassio' – the three objects of Othello's belief: Desdemona, love and Cassio – appear there in the same order as they appear in the belief? In 'Desdemona's love for Cassio' there is an ordering of only two things, namely Desdemona and Cassio.

What Russell should really have said, we might suggest, is this: that in the belief complex the object *terms* (Desdemona and Cassio) appear in an order, and that those terms are to appear in that same order in the truth-making complex. Indeed, on 'restatement' Russell does seem to 'clarify himself' in just this direction:

If we take such a belief as 'Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio', we will call Desdemona and Cassio the *object-terms* and loving the *object-relation*. If there is a complex unity 'Desdemona's love for Cassio', consisting of the object-terms related by the object-relation in the same order as they have in the belief, then this complex unity is called the *fact corresponding to the belief*. (PP p75)

But it is nonetheless telling, I think, that this is not what was initially presented. That Russell's initial suggestion was to define the truth-making complex as that composed of the

objects of the belief ‘in the same order’ as that in which they appear in the belief complex is indicative, I shall propose, of his (indistinctly) sensing again the same ‘deep problem’ that we referred to above. And this deep problem is (manifestly, we shall see) not going to be touched by an ordering, solely, of the object terms apart from the object relation.

1.5

It’s time now to make a more direct approach to this postulated ‘deep problem’. This we can do by looking at why Russell gives up on his idea that the sense of the belief relation can sort things out. Appeal to that sense (in its second, ‘corrected’ version) promises to be adequate to solve the problem of the non-determination of a complex by (the mere enumeration of) its constituents alone. (Try the definition: the sense of the judgment relation orders its terms as: subject, object relation, object term 1, ..., object term n (the definition, that is, that a judgment’s objective is that fact in which the second term of the judgment relates the terms which follow it in the same order as they appear in the judgment).) Within months, however, Russell has abandoned the suggestion.

Looking back in the 1913 work *Theory of Knowledge* at his earlier version of the multiple relation theory as laid out in *The Problems of Philosophy* in 1912, Russell writes:

What is the proof that we must understand the “form” before we can understand the proposition? I held formerly that the objects alone sufficed, and that the “sense” of the relation of understanding would put them in the right order; this, however, no longer seems to me to be the case. Suppose we wish to understand “ A and B are similar”. It is essential that our thought should, as is said, “unite” or “synthesize” the two terms and the relation; but we cannot *actually* “unite” them, since either A and B are similar, in which case they are already united, or they are dissimilar, in which case no amount of thinking can force them to become united. The process of “uniting” which we *can* effect in thought is the process of bringing them into relation with the general form of dual complexes. (TK p116)

This, I take it, is rather unexpected. Indeed it might seem that we have here something entirely new. Suddenly what is required is that in a thought (belief, judgment, understanding etc.) the constituents of the objective (the objects of the thought) be ‘synthesised’ or ‘united’

in some way. And the sense of the believing relation is inadequate to this task, the criticism seems to be, because that could only either unite them properly (which it cannot do: no amount of thinking can force things together) or not unite them at all. Thus the sense of the relating relation cannot do what Russell formerly held that it could do, namely ‘unite things in thought’ without *actually* uniting them.

Leaving to one side (for the moment) the failure of the theory of *The Problems of Philosophy* to meet this new requirement, let’s pursue awhile the requirement itself. Where has it come from? The problem we were facing before (was it not?) was that the thought might not determine a unique truth-maker. If two or more different complexes can be composed out of the same objects, then a thought cannot distinguish between them merely by containing their component entities. Something beyond the giving of the entities themselves must be looked to in order to make the required distinction, and the order of appearance of the object terms, as given in the sense of the belief relation, seemed capable for that task. But suddenly that’s not the issue at all, or at least not really: the ‘sense of the belief relation’ idea fails not because it cannot distinguish between a belief made true by ‘A’s love for B’ and one made true by ‘B’s love for A’, but because it is inadequate to ‘unite’ in some ‘essential’ way within the thought the components of the objective. What, then, is this ‘uniting’ which is ‘essential’ to a thought?

Well, the following is, through all his theories of judgment from 1903-1918, a Russellian fundamental: a thought (an atomic thought) has an objective (that which is thought) which is a complex *unity*. The objective of a thought (a proposition until 1906, a fact thereafter) has a unity which distinguishes it from the mere collection or list of its constituents (a complex is a unified whole and not a set or a list).⁵ We think *that something is the case*, that A and B *are* similar. We do not think: A and B and similarity, or A then similarity then B. More, that this is so, that what we think are unities of entities and not mere collections or lists, is – we should see – a matter *internal* to what thought is. It is not as if the thought presents a collection of things which we subsequently, following some rule external to the thought, combine together to form the thought’s objective. Rather, a thought must itself present the components of its objective *as* the components they are of that unity. The thought must itself present the components of its objective *as united together*; it must itself, as it were, ‘unite’ them. This, I suggest, is Russell’s concern.

Tendency
desc. of
good
unity.

To repeat: We think *that something is the case*, that A and B are similar. And this is not a two stage achievement. We do not think: A and B and similarity, or A then similarity then B, and then arrive only later at how those things must be put together if the thought is to be true. We do not merely have things in thought to be combined together: rather in thought we have things already combined together. When I think that this is red, then what is given by my thought is neither this *and* redness nor this *then* redness, but this being red. Again: my belief does not merely present this *and* redness, and nor does it merely *pass from this to* redness (present this *then* redness); what it presents rather is this being red. It is a matter internal ('essential') to my belief that it presents the components of its objective not as separate entities but rather as combined together, as the components they are of that objective. That this is so we might call the 'phenomenon' of unity in thought; to respect it will be the requirement on theories of judgment of unity in thought.

Applying this requirement to Russell's multiple relation theory in which the components of the objective are the several objects of the judgment, what we obtain is the need for a judgment to, as it were, 'unite' its several objects. When, for Russell, we are acquainted with an object then that single entity is presented to the subject as a self-standing unit; Russell's multiple relation judgments must differ for Russell from a 'relation of multiple acquaintance' in that their several objects must not be presented to the subject as a series of independent, self standing units. In a judgment the several objects must be presented as combined together. But how is this to be achieved?

Well certainly not in this way: by the several objects being *actually* combined together in the judgment. A Russellian thought must *somehow* synthesise its objects without *actually* synthesising them, for a Russellian thought in which the objects are *actually* synthesised is a thought which contains its truth-making objective, and so is a thought which entails its own truth. How to have his judgments achieve something we should be happy to call a 'synthesis in thought' (a presentation in thought as synthesised; a yielding by thought as synthesised) which does not entail a synthesis in reality is, for Russell, an urgent problem.

1.6

With this new perspective let's revisit the two versions of Russell's multiple relation theory

⁵ See chapter 2 for a prolonged discussion of this point.

which we have seen so far. Both, I suggest, can (and should to some measure at least) be seen as attempts to meet the unity requirement (the requirement that it be internal to his thoughts that they present the components of their objectives as combined together); and both, I suggest, can be viewed in that light as stumbling at the (counter-) requirement to leave room for falsity.

It was not – not merely, we can suggest – some difficulty with ensuring uniqueness of complex determination which saw the 1910 Russell according sense to his object relation in a belief complex. Recall what he said:

[T]he relation [of love] must not be abstractly before the mind, but must be before it as proceeding from A to B. (NTF p158)

Why not? Well certainly, we must allow, in order that there be a distinction between a belief in A's love for B and one in B's love for A. But we should note also that it is *precisely* against the objects of a judgment being all 'abstractly before the mind' – being before the mind, that is, as separate, self-standing entities – that the requirement of unity in thought militates. The suggestion thus becomes inviting that operative in the background to Russell's ideas here is a desire (indistinct, no doubt) to hold judgment apart from a 'multiple acquaintance relation' for reasons other than uniqueness of objective determination. Already at this stage, we may reasonably conjecture, Russell felt indistinctly that the objects of a judgment must somehow there (in thought) be unified, and to this end his first suggestion is that the object relation effect that unity by proceeding between the object terms.

We criticised this idea above with the insistence that what is occurring as a term (i.e. the object relation) cannot have a sense, but an alternative perspective is also available. For we could comment that for a relation to proceed between certain terms, to have a sense with regard to those terms, is precisely (is it not?) for that relation to relate those terms. What we have with the idea that the object relation has a sense with regard to the object terms is thus nothing discernibly less than the idea that what is present in thought is, simply, the fact itself. In Russell's suggestion that the object relation has a sense we lose our grip, it would seem, on the crucial idea that a thought is a relation to several distinct objects and not to a single complex one, and with that loss comes the loss of the possibility of falsity. For 'love' in the belief complex 'S believes A loves B' to have a sense from A to B is for that belief complex

to contain the sub-complex 'A loves B', and so for it to entail its own truth. Russell can in this way have unity in thought, it would seem, only by having a unity in reality.⁶

Moving to the version of *The Problems of Philosophy*, let's remind ourselves of its crux:

[I]f Othello believes *truly* that Desdemona loves Cassio, then there is a complex unity, 'Desdemona's love for Cassio', which is composed exclusively of the *objects* of the belief, in the same order as they had in the belief. (PP p74)

Russell's assertion now is that the belief relation holds its several objects together *in that same order* as they have in the fact whose existence would make it true (its objective). Why would he want to say this? Well my suggestion here (bear with it if it looks outrageous) is as follows: Russell is concerned (still indistinctly) that the several objects of his judgment must be, somehow, united there in thought as they are in reality when the judgment is true. Conflating 'combined in the same way' with 'appearing in the same order', he then suggests very quickly that it is the belief relation which effects the requisite unity: the belief relation, in having a sense, puts the several objects together in the belief in the same order (/combines them there in the same way) as they appear in reality when the belief is true.

This harsh charge stands in need of strong support. For this, recall Russell's own 1913 criticism of the 'ordering idea':

I held formerly that the objects alone sufficed, and that the "sense" of the relation of understanding would put them in the right order; this, however, no

⁶ Just this was Stout's objection, the reply to which we cited above:

It may be argued from Mr. Russell's own account of the matter that the manifold items to which the mind is related in judging do have a unity of their own and are apprehended as having a unity of their own distinct from that of the whole complex formed by the judging mind and its object. What seems to me decisive in this point is the requirement not only that that one of the items should be itself a relation but that it should have a "sense" or direction with reference to the other terms. The belief that A loves B is different from the belief that B loves A; and the difference, as Mr. Russell himself expressly recognises, can only be accounted for by saying that in the first case the relation of loving is apprehended as proceeding from A to B and in the second as proceeding from B to A. This seems fatal to the view that nothing single is before the mind in judgment except the complex formed by the judging

longer seems to me to be the case. Suppose we wish to understand “*A* and *B* are similar”. It is essential that our thought should, as is said, “unite” or “synthesize” the two terms and the relation; but we cannot *actually* “unite” them, since either *A* and *B* are similar, in which case they are already united, or they are dissimilar, in which case no amount of thinking can force them to become united. (TK p116)

Russell is quite clear: the judgment relation’s ‘putting its objects in the right order’ was (perhaps less than fully consciously) an attempt to meet the requirement that the thought ‘synthesise’ them in some way. But now that the requirement is explicitly recognised, we can see clearly the inadequacy of this response. If the ‘ordering’ talked of in thought in the 1912 theory was to be ‘the way things are together in facts’ (i.e. the way an *n*-ary relation and *n* terms are together when they are united in a complex), then (and only then) the theory does, as Russell retrospectively suggests, amount to the idea that we can think things together, that we can make things true by thinking them. The thinking relation itself ‘puts the objects in the right order’, i.e. puts them together in that way which constitutes the fact’s existence. Falsity is ruled out. But if the order of objects given in a thought is (what officially it is), rather, a mere sequence, then we are not even beginning to touch the synthesis requirement: the requirement is for a uniting, not for a sequencing. His being unclear as to what was meant by ‘order’ in the statements of his theory allowed Russell falsely to suppose he had solved the problem, only indistinctly sensed at that time, of unity in thought. In fact the theory meets the unity requirement only at the expense of foreclosing the possibility of falsity.

(One point worth highlighting here is that such false comfort can be derived only if the object relation is included in the ordering effected in (and by) the thought. This I remarked above. The thought that *a* loves *b* is to order not merely *a* and *b*, but *a* and love and *b*; it must ‘put together’ all three elements of its objective, or else we cannot even kid ourselves that an issue of ‘unity in thought’ is being addressed. The fact we are thinking is composed of *a* and *b* and love, not of *a* and *b* only. Thus the ‘restatement’ of Russell’s theory in *The Problems of Philosophy*, in which only *a* and *b* are ordered in the same way in the two complexes (judgment and objective), must, soberly, abandon all pretence of solving the unity problem. That it does so, however, should make us loathe to see it – even considering the fact that

mind itself and the manifold of objects to which it is related. (Stout (1911) pp. 202-203)

unlike the initial presentation it avoids the error of supposing R to be in a sequence with a and b in R(a, b) – as the ‘proper version’ of the theory of *The Problems of Philosophy*. For not only is it not the restated version which is attacked in *Theory of Knowledge* – we attack there the idea that the sense of the belief relation can put A and B and similarity in the right ‘order’ – but further the criticism there made is of a failure to achieve what the restated version cannot even be attempting to achieve, namely a solution to the unity problem. It is, I think it thus clear, the first of the two statements in *The Problems of Philosophy* which better shows the (full extent of the) work the 1912 Russell wanted, indistinctly perhaps, the sense of the belief relating relation to do for him.)

1.7

The major novelty of the subsequent, 1913, version of the multiple relation theory of judgment (the version against which Wittgenstein’s criticism is directly made (see below)), laid out in *Theory of Knowledge*, is the introduction of logical forms as additional terms of belief complexes. S’s belief that A and B are similar is now to be the complex B(S, A, similarity, B, γ), where γ is the general form of the dual complex:

Thus, if we call the subject *S*, and the relating relation (of which “understanding” is the one presupposed by all the others [i.e. judging, thinking etc.]) *U*, and the objects *x*, *R*, *y* (taking the case of a proposition asserting a dual relation for the sake of illustration), and γ the form of dual complexes, the total complex which occurs when the subject has the relation *U* to the objects in question may be symbolised by $U(S, x, R, y, \gamma)$. (TK p115)

But what is ‘the form of dual complexes’? As early as 1904, Russell is discussing ‘the way things are combined in a complex’ as a kind of *entity*:

A *complex* is a unity formed by certain constituents combined in a certain manner. (OF p98)

The mode of combination of the constituents of a complex is not itself one of the constituents of the complex. (OF p98)

A mode of combination, like everything else, is an entity. (OF p98)

By 1913 these ‘modes of combination’ are being called *forms*:

It is obvious, in fact, that when *all* the constituents of a complex have been enumerated, there remains something which may be called the “form” of the complex, which is the way in which the constituents are combined in the complex. (TK p98)

And the explicit purpose (as we have seen) of including these form terms in judgment complexes is to solve the problem of unity (I cite the important passage in full):

What is the proof that we must understand the “form” before we can understand the proposition? I held formerly that the objects alone sufficed, and that the “sense” of the relation of understanding would put them in the right order; this, however, no longer seems to me to be the case. Suppose we wish to understand “*A* and *B* are similar”. It is essential that our thought should, as is said, “unite” or “synthesize” the two terms and the relation; but we cannot *actually* “unite” them, since either *A* and *B* are similar, in which case they are already united, or they are dissimilar, in which case no amount of thinking can force them to become united. The process of “uniting” which we *can* effect in thought is the process of bringing them into relation with the general form of dual complexes. The form being “something and something have a certain relation”, our understanding of the proposition might be expressed in the words “something, namely *A*, and something, namely *B*, have a certain relation, namely similarity”. I do not mean this as a full analysis, but only as suggesting the way in which form is relevant. In an actual complex, the general form is not presupposed; but when we are concerned with a proposition which may be false, and where, therefore, the actual complex is not given, we have only, as it were, the “idea” or “suggestion” of the terms being united in such a complex; and this, evidently, requires that the general form of the merely supposed complex should be given. More simply, in order to understand “*A* and *B* are similar”, we must know what is supposed to be done with *A* and *B* and similarity, i.e. what it is

for two terms to have a relation; that is, we must understand the form of the complex which must exist if the proposition is true. I do not know how to make this point more evident, and I must therefore leave it to the reader's inspection, in hopes that he will arrive at the same conclusion. (TK p116)

In a belief, where falsity is to remain an option and so the actual complex is not given (contrast, for Russell, perception), it is not enough merely to give the complex's components: there must also be 'the "idea" or "suggestion" of the terms being united in such a complex'. Thought must, 'as is said, "unite" or "synthesise"' the components of its objective. And what this means, Russell now thinks, is that the form of the objective – the mode of combination of its components – must be there too in the thought.

We require of Russell that in his thoughts the several objects be, somehow, 'united'. Such a uniting, Russell has now recognised, cannot be achieved by any of the objects themselves, for they feature within the thought as self-standing terms. Nor can it be achieved by the way in which they are held together by the thought relating relation (by the sense of the thought relation). What options, then, are left for this work? Well how about this: what is given in a belief is not merely the components of its objective, but further the manner in which they are put together in that objective. A belief, 'as is said', unites things together in a certain way without *actually* uniting them in that way – it contains the 'suggestion' of things being united in a certain way, it presents things as united in a certain way – by containing both the things and the certain way. A belief offers: *these* things, and *that* way. Uniting things in thought is a matter of having them in thought together with a mode of combination.

Russell hopes that we will arrive with him at this conclusion. I should hope that we find it far from comfortable. How, one might well ask, can adding another term, another self-standing unit, to the list of things collected in thought suddenly bring it about that the original things be before the mind no longer as a list but rather as united together? Surely all one has now is a longer list! That it indeed cannot, I shall suggest, is shown by Wittgenstein's famous criticism, to which we shall now, at last, turn.

1.8

My reading of Wittgenstein's assertion that Russell's theory allows for nonsense judgments comes in two parts: first how it is true, and second the force of that truth (for Wittgenstein, at

least) as regards Russell's theory of judgment. The latter, as just intimated, is that Russell's multiple relation theory – in all three versions – is shown to be radically incapable of solving the problem presented to it of unity in thought. But before going there we must address the former.

Let's remind ourselves quickly of the basic idea of complex construction forming the background to Russell's work: Entities appear in (atomic) complexes either as terms or as relating relations; the fundamental metaphysical types of entity being thus *term* – an entity which may appear in a complex as a term – and *n-ary relation* – an entity which may appear in a complex as an n-relating relation. And what we need to emphasise on this visit is that the theory here really is the *fundament*; it is *the* basic rule of complex construction.

Recognising that this is so in the early work of *The Principles of Mathematics* means recognising (as obvious) that if x_1, \dots, x_n are terms and R an n-ary relation then there is a complex (n factorial of them, in fact) composed of x_1, \dots, x_n and R in which R figures as the relating relation and the x_i as terms. There is no rule of complexes operative alongside that just given which says that complexes with certain types of relating relation have certain types of terms. Rather:

It is characteristic of the terms of a proposition that any one of them may be replaced by any other entity without our ceasing to have a proposition.
(POM p45, recall that all entities are terms)

So whilst space may be left for an idea that the complex (the proposition) 'Redness is human' is necessarily false, there is no room for saying that there is no such complex: just switch the term Socrates for the term redness in the proposition 'Socrates is human'. Where there are n terms and an n-ary relation there is a complex in which the n-ary relation relates the n terms.

Our concerns with Russell, however, are focused on his later ideas in which complexes have moved from being propositions to being facts, and in this new context the matter of complex existence complicates somewhat. We cannot simply take a complex such as 'Socrates being human' and switch the term Socrates for any other term without ceasing to have a complex, for the term we would switch for Socrates may not in fact be human, in which case there will be no complex of that term as subject and humanity as predicate. How then, one might ask,

does the ongoing theory of complex construction maintain its role as the fundament of Russell's metaphysics?

Well, the suggestion is, by a simple shift in the theory's weight from matters of actuality to matters of possibility. What is guaranteed in the later work is not a complex's existence but its basic constructability – its (atomic) logical possibility, let us say. Instead of: there is an atomic complex in which R is the relating relation and x_1, \dots, x_n the terms just in case R is an n -ary relation and x_1, \dots, x_n are terms, we now have: it is logically possible that there be an atomic complex in which R is the relating relation and x_1, \dots, x_n the terms just in case R is an n -ary relation and x_1, \dots, x_n are terms. Whatever other rules (physical, psychological etc.) there may be room for permitting or forbidding the existence of certain complexes, the possibilities and impossibilities they offer must be secondary to these basic logical possibilities and impossibilities. (These secondary rules will be what would have concerned the possibilities and impossibilities of truth value of the 1903 complexes as opposed to their existence.) What is ruled out logically cannot be ruled in in any other way, and what is ruled in logically is ruled in logically.

And what is ruled in logically by this theory of atomic complexes is what corresponds, throughout Russell's work, to a *significant* atomic sentence. The sentence " $R(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ " makes sense just in case there is/it is logically possible that there be such a complex as $R(x_1, \dots, x_n)$. Indeed, we can see the basic continuity between the two stages here in terms, precisely, of sentence significance: from *The Principles of Mathematics* right through to *Theory of Knowledge* the sentence " $R(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ " is significant – has a truth value – just in case x_1, \dots, x_n are terms and R is an n -ary relation. And as every entity is, throughout, a term, this condition for significance is, throughout, a condition simply on R :

It seems plain that " aRb " has "meaning" provided R is the right sort of entity, and that the question whether R is the right sort of entity depends on its logical character. (TK p134)

Unless R is a relation, xRy is not a proposition at all, true or false. (POM p25, Russell, notoriously in POM, fails properly to make use-mention distinctions)

"aRb" is significant if, and only if, R has the right logical character – if and only if, that is to say, R is a dual relation. "aRb" is significant, expresses a true-or-false proposition, just in case there is/it is logically possible for there to be a complex in which R relates a to b – just in case, that is, the basic rules of complex construction allow, given the logical types of R, a and b, for such a complex.

Now with this return to Russell's basic metaphysics we can, I hope, begin more clearly to see what the basis of Wittgenstein's complaint must be. The complaint (we can recall from above) was that 'S judges that aRb' does not, for Russell, entail the significance of "aRb" ('S judges that aRb' does not entail 'aRb \vee ~aRb' (CL p29 above)). But the significance of "aRb", we have just asserted, rests on R's being a dual relation. It must be, therefore, that Wittgenstein takes Russell to be committed to the possibility of judgments the 'object relation' of which is not in fact a relation of the required order. Wittgenstein's complaint is going (to have) to be this: that there is no guarantee possible that the object singled out by a judgment as its 'object relation' will be an entity of the right logical character actually to relate (those objects singled out as) the object terms (i.e. that it will be a relation of the appropriate order). How, though, is this a fair complaint?

Well, very simply: In the judgment complex J(S, a, R, b), R figures as a term, and there is therefore no guarantee issuing from the basic rule of complex construction – no *logical* guarantee – as to the nature of R beyond its being a term. It is logically possible for there to be a complex J(S, a, R, b) in which R is not a dual relation – redness is a term, and so the sentence "J(S, a, redness, b)" must, for Russell, *make sense*, even if it is necessarily (physically, psychologically or however) false. S, a, redness and b (and γ , if you like) are terms, and J a 4-ary (or 5-ary) relation, so it is logically possible that there be a complex in which J is the relating relation and S, a, redness and b (and γ) the terms. Wittgenstein's point is thus quite correct: there is no inference from 'J(S, a, R, b)' to 'aRb \vee ~aRb' (to the significance of "aRb") without an additional premise either regarding the non-logical nature of judgments or, directly, regarding the logical nature of R (the premise that it is a dual relation).

Wittgenstein's complaint is as follows: because the several objects of a judgment appear there as terms, the existence of a judgment guarantees logically only that its several objects are all terms, and that guarantee is insufficient to ensure that they will themselves be capable

logically of constituting a complex (the objective). Perhaps the objects will all be particulars. Or one particular and three 27-ary relations. 27-ary relations are terms too. Nothing in Russell's theory rules out the (logical) possibility of a 'judgment that Socrates redness Plato', or that 'Plato is in between' or that 'this table penholders the book' (NB p96). Russell is committed, *in all three versions of his multiple relation theory* (adding a logical form term is entirely impotent here), to the logical possibility of judgments amongst the n objects of which none (let alone the one picked out, somehow, as the object relation) is an $(n-1)$ -ary relation. He is committed to the logical possibility of judgments the several objects of which are logically incapable of constituting together a complex (a fact). This is what Wittgenstein means by a judgment's being a 'piece of nonsense' (TLP 5.5422), and it is against this that he is set.

1.9

To reinforce this conclusion, it will be useful briefly to consider a certain alternative reading of the type of nonsense judgment that Wittgenstein is concerned to rule out. Consider the following passage from Griffin (1985):

An alternative reply, and one which I should favour, would be simply to admit nonsense judgments. Indeed, it seems to be that, contra Wittgenstein, it is an essential feature of a correct theory of judgment that it permits nonsense to be judged. Just as it is clear that people can, and do, judge falsely, even inconsistently, it is also clear that they can, and sometimes do, judge nonsensically. Judgments made by the insane are an obvious class of examples. Someone sufficiently paranoid might believe that he was persecuted by the prime numbers, or that the teapot sneered at him. An adequate theory of belief must allow for such possibilities. (Griffin 1985 p241)

But it is not, as I read it, Wittgenstein's concern to rule out that someone judge two terms to be related by a dual relation of some mismatching sort (judge that a teapot is sneering at a person); it is being ruled out rather that someone judge two terms to be related by what is not a dual relation at all. What is nonsensical, in the sense I take to be in play, is not the relation-relata mismatch of 'The teapot sneered at John' but rather the symbol string 'The teapot redness John'. Griffin is not alone in being confused at this crucial juncture:

So Wittgenstein thought ... that inappropriate substitutions could be made in Russell's formula. His example, "this table penholders the book", is not, however, a happy one. "Penholders" is not a relation, although Russell's formula calls for a relation between the other two terms in a judgment of the form "aRb". It is a mystery why Wittgenstein thought Russell's formula could yield "this table penholders the book". A superior example of nonsense has been suggested. In this example, a genuine relation is substituted, but a relation which is inappropriate to the objects it purportedly relates. For example, Russell's formula might yield the judgment that "2 loves 7" or "the knife is the square root of the fork". (Blackwell 1981 p23)

Wittgenstein's point, however, is precisely that Russell's formula *can* yield "this table penholders the book" despite the fact that "penholder" is not a relation. And this is nothing mysterious: Russell's formula is unable to call with logical insistence for a relation between the two object terms of a judgment 'of the form "aRb"' because in that formula (the formula $J(S, a, R, b, \gamma)$) the 'object relation' R appears not as a relation but as a term. What appears in a complex as a term may, logically, be replaced by any entity suited logically to appear in complexes as a term (may be replaced, that is, by any term).

Here, though, we owe a debt of explanation: How is it that Blackwell can find Wittgenstein's example mysterious when I give such a plain account of it? How can Griffin have read the kind of nonsense judgments Wittgenstein is objecting to so differently from me? Well, consider the following passages from *Theory of Knowledge*:

A complex is "unsymmetrical" with respect to two of its constituents if the two occupy different positions in the complex. An unsymmetrical complex is called "homogeneous" with respect to the unsymmetrical constituents if a logically possible complex results from interchanging them; otherwise it is called "heterogeneous". ... "A is a constituent of α " is unsymmetrical and heterogeneous with respect to A and α . (TK p123)

Subjects and predicates belong to different logical divisions, and cannot properly be said to be either like or unlike, because that would give them

similar “positions” in one complex, whereas, if both occur in one complex, they must have differences of “position” corresponding to the fact that they can for a subject-predicate complex. (TK p92)

Despite the fact that redness and *the redness of this* are both terms, and that ‘is a constituent of’ and ‘is similar to’ are both dual relations, there are, Russell is saying, no such logically possible complexes as ‘*the redness of this* is a constituent of redness’ and ‘redness is similar to this’. Russell is thus implicitly denying the basic principle from which, on my reading, Wittgenstein’s complaint flows – the principle:

(*) What appears in a certain basic manner (as term/n-relating relation) in a certain complex may there be replaced with any entity capable of appearing in that way in complexes (by any term/n-ary relation) to yield a logically possible complex.

As noted, Russell had held to (*) in *The Principles of Mathematics*:

It is characteristic of the terms of a proposition that any one of them may be replaced by any other entity without our ceasing to have a proposition.
(POM p45 (all entities are terms))

but the passages from *Theory of Knowledge* would suggest that later on he changed his mind. No surprise, then, that commentators do not take Wittgenstein to be making an objection which relies on Russell’s being committed, in 1913, to (*). Indeed, serious doubt would seem to be cast over the work of section 1.8 above. But I shall stick to my guns: Russell is, in 1913, committed to (*).

What I shall offer is this: In *Theory of Knowledge*, Russell was under the impression that he had the right to prohibit logically certain complexes in which an n-ary relation relates n terms. In particular, he was under the impression that he could use this right to ensure the appropriate logical character of the object relation in his judgment complexes. Wittgenstein’s objection, however, was for Russell a sobering reminder that he did not in fact have that right. Russell was prompted by Wittgenstein to recognise that he could not after all rule out a ‘judgment that Jack Jill’. This he naturally found upsetting. (It’s unclear how keenly he felt the further worry, discussed below, that he had not solved his problem of unity in thought.

The matter of unity in thought was, I shall argue in the appendix to this chapter, primarily Wittgenstein's concern.) I shall support this suggestion in two ways: first by (briefly) questioning the coherence for Russell of denying (*) and subsequently by examining Russell's reaction to Wittgenstein's objection.

Russell holds still in 1913 to his long standing idea that the most fundamental characterisation of a complex is its constitution of an n-ary relation relating n terms. The *basic, logical* forms of complexes are: subject-predicate, dual relation, triple relation And having this as the fundament means, we must insist, seeing it as giving the fundamental logical possibilities and impossibilities for complexes. To suggest that there are further possibilities and impossibilities which operate *on the same level* (which are *logical* possibilities and impossibilities) is simply to suggest that there is further theory of complexes which sits *alongside* and not *above* (subsequent to) this basic theory. But that is not how Russell plays: an n-ary relation relating n terms is *the* basic characterisation of a complex. Whatever is ruled out higher up the theories (physical, psychological etc.), there must be a basic sense of *logical* possibility in which what is a term is suited to be related by what is a relation.

Russell talks in 1913 of entities occupying *positions* in complexes. With this, we can put the point as follows: the most basic characterisation of a position within a complex must be as a term position or as an n-relating position. Those are the types of positions which are delineated in the basic forms – subject-predicate, dual relation etc.. And now we shall want to ask: what could be meant by suggesting that there is a term position within a complex which certain terms are fundamentally – logically – unsuited to occupy? To suggest that a certain position is *logically* restricted to entities of a certain kind is to suggest that that position is characterised *fundamentally* by that kind. Russell is simply confused, I suggest, in implying otherwise, in implying that there are term positions in which certain terms are in the most basic sense – logically – unsuited to occur.

Here is not, however, space to push further the matter of this incoherence.⁷ (My ongoing concern in this thesis is with Wittgenstein and unity, not (directly) with Russell.) Let's move

⁷ Though I can hazard the following explanation of Russell's move away from his frank 1903 acceptance of (*): As the years proceed, Russell feels pressure stemming from Frege and (more directly) Wittgenstein to suggest that signs for entities which differ logically cannot be inter-substituted without loss of significance. (Not that I want to suggest either Frege or Wittgenstein held that, but

instead to inspect Russell's reaction to Wittgenstein's complaint; here we shall find strong support for my reading. Russell, I have suggested, supposed (confusedly) he could insist logically that the 'object relation' of a judgment be a relation of the correct order to relate the object terms. And Wittgenstein's (direct) point is that as that entity (the object relation) appears in the judgment not as a relation of a certain order but as a term, Russell is not in fact entitled to such a logical insistence. If this reading of Wittgenstein is correct, and if Russell is to take Wittgenstein's point on board (if he is to recognise his commitment to (*)), then we should of Russell one of two responses: expect either a biting of the bullet allowance of 'judgments that Jack Jill' (judgments of logical nonsense), or a recanting of his earlier idea that 'loves' in 'S believes A loves B' appears as a term and the insistence instead that it must appear in a (basic) manner proper to dual relations. Well, in the 1918 lectures *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* we find:

[A] main thing one wants to notice in this matter [is] ... the impossibility of putting the subordinate verb on a level with its terms as an object term in the belief. That is a point in which I think that the theory of judgment which I set forth once in print some years ago was a little unduly simple, because I did then treat the object verb as if one could put it as just an object like the terms, as if one could put 'loves' on a level with Desdemona and Cassio as a term for the relation 'believe' [in the complex 'Othello believes Desdemona loves Cassio']. (PLA p226)

And:

Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio.' There you have a false belief. You have this odd state of affairs that the verb 'loves' occurs in that proposition and seems to occur as relating Desdemona to Cassio whereas in fact it does not do so, but yet it does occur as a verb, it does occur in the sort of way that a verb should do. I mean that when A believes that B loves C,

rather than that that is how a certain Fregean and Wittgensteinian basic translates into Russell's world.) (See Ramsey to Wittgenstein in 1924: 'Of all your work he [Russell] seems now to accept only this: that it is nonsense to put an adjective where a substantive ought to be' (CL p197).) Unlike Frege and Wittgenstein, however, Russell is involved in a (nightmarish) theory within which two entities which differ logically (one is simple and the other complex, or one particular and the other universal), may at once be logically the same (may both be capable of featuring in complexes in the same way, may both be terms), and so his hand is simply not free to make the move he feels pressured to make.

you have to have a verb in the place where ‘loves’ occurs. You cannot put a substantive in its place. Therefore it is clear that the subordinate verb (i.e., the verb other than believing) is functioning as a verb, and seems to be relating two terms, but as a matter of fact does not when the judgment happens to be false. That is what constitutes the puzzle about the nature of belief. (PLA p225)

‘Loves’ in ‘Othello believes Desdemona loves Cassio’ is not occurring ‘on a level with Desdemona and Cassio as a term for the relation ‘believe’’. Why not? Because ‘when A believes B loves C, you have to have a verb in the place where ‘loves’ occurs. You cannot put a substantive in its place. Therefore it is clear that the subordinate verb is functioning as a verb.’ Wittgenstein’s point (to repeat) was precisely that because ‘loves’ was, in Russell’s earlier theories, on a level with Desdemona as a term for the belief relation, you *could* put a substantive in its place. You could have ‘Othello believes Desdemona Shakespeare Cassio’ or ‘Othello believes Desdemona penholder Cassio’. Russell, we can now see, embraces the justice of this criticism – he recognises that what appears as a term can be replaced by any other term, that what can (logically) be replaced only by a verb must be appearing there not as a term but as a verb. Russell, this is to say, now recognises – as he (implicitly) did not in 1913 – his commitment to (*).

Of course, the question now opens up for Russell: how then does ‘loves’ occur in ‘A believes B loves C’? It must occur *as a verb* – in a manner proper to verbs – (the position it occupies must be not a term position but a verbal one, on pain of the possibility of its being replaced by (say) a particular) but the only manner proper to verbs in the theory of complexes developed so far is the manner of a relating relation. And ‘loves’ certainly can’t occur there in that manner, as actually relating B to C, for as Russell notes the possibility of falsity would then be foreclosed. What we must have here, therefore, is a *new* way of appearing in complexes that is neither as term nor as n-relating relation. We must, that is to say, extend our basic theory of complexes – we must extend our list of basic forms of complexes to allow for complexes in which entities appear as relations (in a manner proper to relations) but not as relating relations. This forcing of his hand is something Russell fully recognises:

It can be shown* that a judgment, and generally all thought whose expressions involves *propositions*, must be a fact of a different logical form

from any of the series: subject-predicate facts, dual relations, triple relations, etc. in this way, a difficult and interesting problem of pure logic arises, namely the problem of enlarging the inventory of logical forms so as to include those forms appropriate to the facts of epistemology.

* As I have come to know through unpublished work of my friend Mr. Ludwig Wittgenstein. (TK p46)

If I say 'Desdemona loves Cassio' that is of the same form as 'A is to the right of B'. Those are of the same form, and I say that nothing that occurs in space is of the same form as belief. I have got on here to a new sort of thing, a new beast for our zoo, not another member of our former species. The discovery of this fact is due to Mr. Wittgenstein. (PLA p226)

The nature of these 'beasts' is Russell's new 'puzzle about the nature of belief'. What is this new relational mode of appearance in complexes? Soon overtaken by the *Tractatus*, however, the puzzle is not pursued.

That completes the work of my account of the nature of Wittgenstein's observation. We can look now, and finally for this chapter, to the *force*, for Wittgenstein, of his observation.

1.10

It might seem a little odd at this stage to talk of Wittgenstein's observation having a 'force' – is it not entirely obvious how what we have here is an objection to Russell's theories? A thought has an objective which is a fact and not a mere collection or list or string of entities; the 1913 Russell, however, allows for judgments from which no fact can be gathered by way of an objective. As an objective, $J(S, \text{Jack, Jill})$ (or $J(S, \text{Jack, Jill, } \gamma)$ where γ is the general form of a subject-predicate complex) can yield only the collection: Jack and Jill, or the list: Jack then Jill – it cannot offer by way of its objective any fact, any complex of objects.

Russell has been concerned from 1910 with the requirement that it must be determinate, of any judgment, what it is a judgment of. (It must, for example, be determinate of the judgment $J(S, A, \text{love, B})$ whether it has 'A's love for B' or 'B's love for A' as its objective.) Russell, this is to say, has been concerned to give a theory in which the correspondence of a judgment with its objective is (defined so as to represent) a *function* from the domain of judgments to

that of objectives. To this, we may now suggest, Wittgenstein adds the further requirement that this function be *complete* (and not merely partial). Russell must be able to ensure not just that corresponding to every judgment is at most one objective, but further that corresponding to every (logically possible) judgment is at least one objective. And Wittgenstein's objection to Russell, the suggestion will then be, is that his theories cannot meet this further requirement.

Now this story is, as far as it goes, quite correct, but it is a central contention of this chapter that it ignores something of great importance. Russell's concern with the workings of his theory of judgment was not, we have suggested, confined to that of meeting a requirement of determination, and Wittgenstein's objection to Russell's theory was not, I want now to suggest, confined to the thought that Russell fails to meet a plausible extension of that requirement: Through the 1910 and 1912 versions of his theory, Russell was inexplicitly (and perhaps not fully self-consciously) concerned with the need for there to be a synthesis of some kind of the several objects of his multiple relation thoughts. In 1913 the concern becomes explicit and form terms are added into the judgments to effect the synthesis. And it is with this concern in view, I contend, that Wittgenstein's makes his objection. Wittgenstein's point is as follows: that it is incompatible with the requirement on Russell that his thoughts synthesise their objects that he allow thoughts whose objects are logically unsynthesisable. We shall finish the chapter with an examination of this incompatibility.

The requirement on Russell that his thoughts synthesise their several objects is the requirement that they present the components of their objectives *as* combined together (*as* the components they are of those facts). The thought itself must have the components of its objective united together: it must have them *as* components, together, of a complex unity. Recall from above:

We do not think: A and B and similarity, or A then similarity then B, and then arrive later at how those things must be put together if the thought is to be true. We do not merely have things in thought, or even merely have things listed in thought, rather in thought we have things *already combined together*. (section 1.5 of this thesis)

And from here, a move here to a prohibition on thoughts of logical nonsense is not, I take it, hard to see: all we need add is an insistence that there is no such thing as presenting an entity as in a logical role to which it is in fact unsuited (as occurring in a complex in a manner to which it is logically unsuited; as being a complex-component of a sort to which it is logically unsuited). Combine the requirement that entities are presented in thought as occurring in (as components of) complexes (the requirement of unity in thought) with the insistence on a coincidence of an entity's logical nature with the logical aspects of such possible presentations, and we arrive straightaway at the impossibility of illogical thought.

For a thought to present, say, Jack and Jill as unified together into a subject-predicate fact (as Jack and humanity are unified in the fact that Jack is human) would mean presenting either Jack or Jill as a predicate, and to present Jill (say) as a predicate unified with the subject Jack would mean identifying what is presented there as a predicate with Jill, the particular. But that, we insist, is nonsensical: the most one could do at this juncture is use the same sign to refer to two different entities (I could decide to *call* what is presented in my thought as a predicate 'Jill').⁸ Russell's thoughts can present Jack and Jill (individually) and then his correspondence definition can talk of a complex in which the first presented entity is subject and the second predicate, but that only goes to show that his thoughts do not themselves present entities *as in position* in their objectives – they do not meet the requirement of unity in thought. Such, I suggest, is Wittgenstein's criticism.

The requirement of unity in thought legislates, we can thus see, against the possibility for Russell of judgments whose two objects are Jack and Jill (whose three objects are a table, a penholder and a book etc.). More generally, it legislates, given the insistence that what is united in thought must be logically uniteable in reality, against the possibility for Russell of judgments whose several objects are logically unsuited to be the components together of a complex. That Russell's theories do not themselves rule out such 'judgments' shows that they do not meet that requirement. (And this is of course a global failure: the suggestion is a non-starter that whilst (for instance) Jack and Jill are not presented as unified in $J(S, \text{Jack}, \text{Jill}, \gamma)$ nonetheless Jack and humanity *are* presented as unified in $J(S, \text{Jack}, \text{humanity}, \gamma)$: there is no relevant difference between the two complexes.)

⁸ This insistence is obviously of the greatest philosophical importance. We cannot, however, discuss the matter here. See Diamond 1991 for a series of important essays on the theme.

In conclusion: The root inability of Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment to rule out judgments the several objects of which are logically unsuited to form together a unity (judgments of logical nonsense) shows that theory to be radically incapable of meeting the requirement of unity in thought. It is of this latter incompetence that Wittgenstein's objection is, primarily, a complaint.

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Appendix to Chapter 1

Historical evidence

In this appendix I shall provide historical support for the contention that Wittgenstein's concern in making his famous criticism of Russell's theory of judgment was with the matter discussed above of unity in thought. This I shall do both by adducing circumstantial historical evidence which tells directly in its favour, and also by showing how well that contention allows for a coherent and detailed explanation of the chronology of events surrounding Wittgenstein's letter of mid June 1913.

It is a requirement on interpretations of Wittgenstein's objection of his letter of mid June 1913 that they do not stand at clear odds with the known facts of the episode ongoing from 20 May of discussion between Wittgenstein and Russell concerning the latter's theories of judgment. And it is, further, happy for an interpretation of the objection that it allow for a coherent explanation of those known facts. My interpretation as given above in chapter 1, I want to suggest in this appendix, makes available a detailed and very plausible understanding of the chronology. More, that understanding does not involve any intrinsically unsupported (but explanatorily useful) conjectures: the two key proposals I shall make to expand the given facts have considerable intrinsic plausibility as well as making for a detailed, coherent reading of the episode as a whole.

Here, then, is what is known of the events (other than those indicated by the letters themselves, the details are taken from the chronology provided by the editors of *Theory of Knowledge*):

(a). On 20 May 1913, as Russell is finishing part I chapter VI of *Theory of Knowledge*, Wittgenstein came to him:

with a refutation of the theory of judgment which I used to hold. He was right, but I think the correction required is not very serious. I shall have to make up my mind within a week, as I shall soon reach judgment. (Russell to Morrell, 21 May 1913)

(b). On 21 May 1913, Russell begins work on part I chapter VII of *Theory of Knowledge*, in which the logical form of complexes is first discussed.

(c). On 24 May 1913, Russell begins part II chapter I of *Theory of Knowledge*, in which judgment is first broached and in which Russell states the requirement that a judgment 'synthesise' its objects. He criticises his former view that the sense of the relating relation can meet this need and suggests instead that it is met by the inclusion of logical forms as terms of judgments.

(d). On 26 May 1913, Wittgenstein again comes to Russell:

We were both cross from the heat. I showed him a crucial part of what I had been writing. He said it was all wrong, not realizing the difficulties – that he had tried my view and knew it wouldn't work. I couldn't understand his objection – in fact he was very inarticulate – but I feel in my bones that he must be right, and that he has seen something I have missed. (Russell to Morrell, 27 May 1913; SLBR p459)

(e). From 26 May 1913 until 6 June 1913, Russell continues with *Theory of Knowledge*. He pauses the work as new difficulties with inference have arisen, unconnected to Wittgenstein's criticisms.

(f). Sometime in the week leading to 18 June 1913 Wittgenstein writes to Russell:

I can now express my objection to your theory of judgment exactly: I believe it is obvious that, from the prop ' A judges that (say) a is in the Rel R to b ', if correctly analysed, the prop ' $aRb \vee \sim aRb$ ' must follow directly *without the use of any other premiss*. This condition is not fulfilled by your theory. (CL p29)

(g). On 18 June 1913, Russell meets Wittgenstein in London for lunch.

(h). On 19 June 1913, Russell writes to Morrell:

All that has gone wrong with me lately comes from Wittgenstein's attack on my work – I have only just realised this. It was very difficult to be honest about it, as it makes a large part of the book I meant to write impossible for years to come probably. (Russell to Morrell, 19 June 1913, SLBR p462)

What I want to suggest to cohere these facts is as follows: On 20 May Wittgenstein puts to Russell the requirement that there be a unity in thought and complains that Russell's theory of judgment of *The Problems of Philosophy* does not meet this requirement. The talk there of thought putting things in the right order is inadequate. Russell agrees and subsequently introduces logical forms into his work, including them as terms in judgments precisely to effect the required unity. On 26 May Russell shows Wittgenstein this new idea (TK p116). Wittgenstein objects inarticulately, telling Russell that he has already tried that suggestion and that it doesn't work – merely adding a form term will not effect the required synthesis in thought. Russell is unsure what to make of Wittgenstein's remarks, and is discouraged but continues nonetheless with the work. In mid-June Wittgenstein makes his objection to Russell's additional form term suggestion more precisely in a letter, and also in person (very likely) on 18 June. Russell is devastated by Wittgenstein's attack and abandons *Theory of Knowledge*, at least for the medium term.

There are, here in this expansion, two key places at which I 'read in between the lines'. But I think that on inspection both can be seen to be highly plausible: Wittgenstein refutes, on 26 May, a theory of judgment Russell 'used to hold'. This, certainly, will be the version laid out in *The Problems of Philosophy*. There was no version intervening between that and the (as yet unpenned) *Theory of Knowledge* version, and Wittgenstein would certainly address himself to Russell's most recent theory. Four or five days later Russell has arrived, in his book, at judgment, and explicitly refutes his 'formerly held' theory of *The Problems of Philosophy*. I suggest that the two 'refutations' are the same. (This is the first key 'reading in between the lines'.)

Supporting this is firstly that its denial would involve supposing a great coincidence of timing between Wittgenstein giving his refutation, and Russell, three or four days later, penning for the first time a quite different refutation. Further, Russell nowhere gives or discusses any refutation of his theory of *The Problems of Philosophy* other than that written so shortly after

the encounter with Wittgenstein. This one might find surprising if there were in fact two. More forceful still, though (to my mind), is the novelty of the refutation in *Theory of Knowledge*. The requirement for unity in thought is not something Russell had ever mentioned before. I argue above that he had, with both his earlier two versions, felt indistinct pressure of this sort (as opposed to finding only the pressure of a determination problem), but certainly the matter had never been explicit or at the forefront. Suddenly it is both. There is no forbear, in Russell's work, for the assertions of a unity requirement that we find on page 116 of *Theory of Knowledge*. This, I take it, fits very happily with the suggestion that they, and their accompanying refutation of the theory of *The Problems of Philosophy*, come from outside, from Wittgenstein.

The second key 'reading in between the lines' is my suggestion above that the 'crucial part' of Russell's work that he showed to Wittgenstein on 26 May is (or at least includes) his response on page 116 of *Theory of Knowledge* to the requirement of unity in thought that forms must be included as terms in judgment complexes. Low grade support for the plausibility of this is that this 'part' (the 'proof' that forms are included in belief complexes) is certainly crucial, and that Russell had written it only a day or two earlier. But far more compelling is the thought that Russell is showing Wittgenstein his new response to the requirement with which Wittgenstein had, just a week earlier, condemned the former version of his theory of judgment. Russell was not in the habit of showing Wittgenstein his ongoing work (in fact, he did not even tell Wittgenstein of the book until 14 May); what he would want to show him, surely, is how he thinks he can now meet the objection Wittgenstein had made a week previously. He wrote then that Wittgenstein's refutation would require a 'correction' to his theory; he is now showing that 'correction' back to Wittgenstein.

Further historical support for this understanding of events is to be gained from Wittgenstein's assertion, on 26 May, that he had already tried Russell's new view and 'knew it wouldn't work'. This notion of Wittgenstein 'trying' an idea and finding it not to 'work' is highly suggestive of there being a problem to which various 'solutions' are being countenanced. It seems clear to me that this background problem was that of unity in thought. On 20 May, I have suggested, Wittgenstein introduced his concern with unity in thought to Russell, showing him that his theory of judgment of *The Problems of Philosophy* is unsatisfactory in that regard. It is only natural, in this suggestion, to suppose further that Wittgenstein himself has been working on alternative responses, one of which might well have been Russell's new

move of including logical forms as terms of his judgments. (Russell's idea of a logical form (as a mode of combination) was, as we have noted, nothing new to *Theory of Knowledge*.)

(Here, with this picture of events, we can perhaps also understand why Wittgenstein took time to formulate precisely his objection to Russell. He sensed immediately that merely adding a form to the string of things present in thought would not effect a unification of any sort of that string. What might plausibly be less immediate for him, however, was how to demonstrate clearly that this is so. Russell complained that Wittgenstein was 'very inarticulate' in his initial, verbal objection and we can understand, perhaps, why. Until the leap is made to the idea of judgments of nonsense, it might well seem hard to know what to say other than: it's clearly not going to work.)

Of course, this reading of events, plausible as it may be both through the intrinsic plausibility of the expansion made of the documented facts and by virtue of the coherence there discernible of the episode as a whole, must be vulnerable to countervailing circumstantial evidence. Looking for such, two points suggest themselves: Russell wrote, on hearing (on 20 May) Wittgenstein's refutation of his former theory, that he thinks that 'the correction required is not very serious', but is the inclusion of logical forms in belief complexes – the 'correction' I am suggesting was made – not really quite serious indeed? Here I would reply that the inclusion of logical forms, crucial as it is to Russell to address the matter of unity, was not a move with very wide importance for him. The only work Russell appears to want the logical form terms to do is, precisely, to effect a unity in thought; take away the one paragraph in which that is discussed and their inclusion would appear entirely unnecessary. In particular, the centrepiece of the new theory of judgment – the basic definition of truth – does not even involve mention of the newly included logical form terms (TK pp. 144-145). (As I've intimated, it's unclear that Russell ever felt the full depth of Wittgenstein's unity in thought concern.) Secondly, against my reading of events, one might find it strange that when refuting his theory of judgment of *The Problems of Philosophy* Russell does not acknowledge that that refutation originates – as I am suggesting it does – with Wittgenstein. But we should remember that this part of *Theory of Knowledge* did not progress beyond manuscript; if it had been prepared for publication there would I suggest, as in earlier chapters which were so prepared, have been added a footnote of acknowledgement to Wittgenstein.

My proposed understanding of events is thus, I consider, undefeated. As suggested above, though, I do not mean to have my reading of Wittgenstein's objection (content or force) depend for its plausibility on the plausibility of the history offered in this appendix. Rather what I can gain here is a measure of additional support for a reading which already, I should hope, merits serious consideration.

Chapter 2

Objects

How should we think of the objects of the *Tractatus*? What should we take their 'logical status' to be? It has, I think, been commonplace to think of them as comparing in logical role with Frege's objects, or with Russell's terms, or his particulars. I shall argue in this chapter that such assimilations are importantly mistaken.

The recommended alternative will be presented in two halves, corresponding to the two aspects of Tractarian objects that they are entities of reference and that they are constituents of atomic facts. Frege will be the point of contrast for the first of these and Russell for the second.

Very briefly, the line will be this: that as Frege has a variety of logical types of entity (objects and the various types of concepts), so Wittgenstein's entities (his 'objects') may be of various forms. Unlike and against Frege, however, Wittgenstein insists that the ontological variety is not available *a priori* – before, that is, the performance of analysis. More, things of all types (objects of all forms) are, for Wittgenstein, essentially copulative. In an atomic fact, Russell (at times at least) had one particular of the elements – the entity occurring as relation – responsible for the unity of the whole; for Wittgenstein the elements are all, together, so responsible. (And with this, it will be urged, we can find the sense of *Tractatus* 1.1: 'The world is the totality of facts, not of things'.)

2.1

Frege, as the early Wittgenstein, makes an important use of the word 'object' (*Gegenstand*). Very blandly, we could outline a fundamental of the Fregean use as follows: What may be referred to (*bedeuten*), we call 'things' or 'entities'. These come in a variety of basic types – objects and various types of concept – the distinction between which is entirely strict and fundamental, is 'founded deep in the nature of things' (FC p148). Objects, we might say,

constitute an ‘ontological category’ and are to be contrasted with members of other such categories, the various categories of concept.^{9, 10}

Leaving the idea of an ‘ontological category’ no more developed than this, we may, noting Wittgenstein’s knowledge of and great respect for Frege’s works, want immediately to know whether the Tractarian objects form in any comparable way one of a number of ontological types. Preliminary evidence points towards a negative response here: there is no contrast class in obvious play in the *Tractatus*. Indeed, the *Tractatus*’ very first use of *Gegenstand* seems calculated to undermine the idea that objects constitute only one of a variety of basic entity types:

A state of affairs is a combination of objects (entities, things).

[Der Sachverhalt ist eine Verbindung von Gegenständen. (Sachen, Dingen).]

(2.01)

‘Object’ is introduced as interchangeable with ‘entity’ or ‘thing’; it would seem ruled out therefore that there be a class of entities, a class to whose members there may be reference, contrasting with ‘the class of’ objects. Rather: all things are objects.

Now clear as this may be (and let’s take it as so), it is perhaps less immediate whether the matter is trivial or substantial. To take it as trivial, we need only suggest that ‘object’ and ‘thing’ are treated by Wittgenstein as synonymous, both meaning ‘what to which there may be reference’. Such a reading, however, finds Frege and Wittgenstein using ‘object’ in very different ways: the Fregean concept-object distinction will be seen as, broadly, a distinction amongst Tractarian objects. And not wanting, perhaps, to be so quick to abandon the possibility of an alignment between Frege and Wittgenstein in their use of ‘object’, we might hope for an alternative, more substantial reading of ‘all things are objects’ under which we can see it as (involving) the claim against Frege that there are no such things as his concepts.

To arrive there we should need first to see how Frege pins ‘object’ down apart from ‘thing’ (i.e. apart from ‘refer’): Beside distinctions of ‘ontological category’ of entities there are, for

⁹ I am not suggesting that this terminology of ‘thing/entity’ and ‘ontological category’ is itself to be found in Frege; its adoption here is to facilitate a comparison with Wittgenstein.

¹⁰ I ignore, for simplifying reasons, that Frege’s ontology includes also functions which are not concepts.

Frege, distinctions of ‘logical category’ of expressions. An expression is a concept word if it is playing a particular logical role in a proposition, a role fundamentally different from that role which when played by an expression constitutes that expression’s being a proper name. And the logic here connects rigidly with the ontology – concept words refer to concepts, proper names refer to objects.

Next, to find the mooted disagreement with Frege, we shall look to take Wittgenstein also to be working with a variety of logical types of expression. More, we shall want him to associate his objects, through reference, with one particular of those (presumed) logical types – a type importantly comparable with the Fregean proper name. For with this in place, we can see the claim that all things are objects as the claim that only words of that ‘proper name’ type refer. Words of other logical types, (including) types comparable (presumably) with Fregean concept words, do not refer to anything – there are no such things as concepts (referents of concept words).

Sections 3.203 and 3.221 of the *Tractatus* might suggest to us that we can indeed make just such a connection: ‘A name refers to an object’ – ‘Der Name bedeutet den Gegenstand’; ‘Objects can ... be *named*’. The line will be that Tractarian names refer to objects and are to be compared to Fregean proper names; other types of signs – (including) types, it is taken, which compare with Fregean concept words – do not refer. Support for a position on these lines might be gathered from section 3.1432:

Instead of, ‘The complex sign “*aRb*” say that *a* stands to *b* in the relation *R*’,
we ought to put, ‘*That* “*a*” stands to “*b*” in a certain relation says *that aRb*.’
(3.1432)

To assert that the complex sign ‘Jack loves Jill’ says that Jack stands to Jill in the relation of loving is, Wittgenstein claims, misleading. (I ignore here that ‘Jack loves Jill’ will not, in all likelihood, be elementary for Wittgenstein.) Now certainly such a reading makes it appear as if there is something, a relation of loving (a Fregean concept), in which it is asserted by the sign that Jack stands to Jill, and so as if there are in the sentential sign three referential elements in play. And certainly Wittgenstein’s ‘counter reading’ removes that immediate appearance. Combine these considerations with the following passage from September 1913:

In "aRb" "R" looks like a substantive but it is not one. What symbolises in "aRb" in that "R" occurs between "a" and "b". (NB p99)

and we would seem to have good reason to think that Wittgenstein does indeed reject the suggestion that relation signs (concept words), such (presumably) as 'loves' in 'Jack loves Jill', refer.

To repeat the going idea, then: There are, in (Tractarian) propositions, signs of a variety of types. Names constitute one such type; likely candidates for other types are relation signs (e.g. 'R' in 'aRb') and property signs (e.g. 'F' in 'Fa'). Names refer to objects; other types of signs do not refer (any more than do punctuation marks) – a claim we could parse with: all things are objects; there are no such things as properties or relations (or whatever).¹¹

The following remark from the Notebooks, however, would seem strongly to undermine any such interpretation of the Tractatus:

Relations and properties, etc. are *objects* too. (NB p61 (16.6.15))

If relations and properties, etc. are objects, then, it would seem, there are such things.

Further, as objects are named, it will look hard not to say that relations and properties, etc. are named by relation- and property- etc. words: these too are *names*. 'Loves' in 'Jack loves Jill' is a name, it would seem, referring to the relation of loving.¹²

Of course, it could be suggested that Wittgenstein had changed his mind regarding the objecthood of relations etc. by the time he came to write the Tractatus. But further

¹¹ Compare Tractatus 4.441: 'It is clear that a complex of the signs 'F' and 'T' has no object (or complex of objects) corresponding to it, just as there is none corresponding to the horizontal and vertical lines or to the brackets. – There are no 'logical objects'.'

¹² To repeat: Jack, Jill and the relation of loving may well, of course, not be simple objects – 'Jack loves Jill' may well not be an elementary proposition – and so the example may seem poorly chosen. But it is as good as any available (see below), and they all three do at least 'function as simple objects' in certain obvious logical contexts:

But logic as it stands, e.g., in *Principia Mathematica* can quite well be applied to our ordinary propositions, e.g., from "All men are mortal" and "Socrates is a man" there follows according to this logic "Socrates is mortal" which is obviously correct although I equally obviously do not know what structure is possessed by the thing Socrates or the property of mortality. Here they just function as simple objects. (NB p69)

considerations stack up. Consider, for instance, the assertion that a state of affairs is a combination of objects (plural) (2.01, above); if 'F' in 'Fa' does not name an object, then the state of affairs it represents (elementary propositions represent states of affairs (2.202, 4.2), see below)) can, it would seem, involve only one object, the referent of 'a'. We would seem to be pressured into seeing Wittgenstein as parting with Frege and denying the existence of propositions involving concept words of a single argument place – all propositions must be relational. And more with 2.01, Lee made the following notes during a discussion in 1930 with Wittgenstein:

2.01. "An atomic fact is a combination of objects (entities, things)". Objects etc. is here used for such things as a colour, a point in visual space etc: cf. also above, A word has no sense except in a proposition. "Objects" also include relations: a proposition is not two things connected by a relation. "Thing" and "relation" are on the same level. The objects hang as it were in a chain. (LWL p120)

Wittgenstein gave colours (e.g., it would seem, the referent of 'red' in 'This book is red') to Lee as an example of the kind of thing he was thinking of as being an object, and he asserted relations to be objects too. We should hesitate, then, to suggest that Tractarian objects line up in any simple way with Fregean objects. It is neither the case that there are contrasting Tractarian ontological categories which may be compared to Fregean concepts and nor is (easily held) that Wittgenstein accepts (roughly) the Fregean proper name/concept word division, his names being (roughly) identifiable with Frege's proper names, but goes on to deny reference to what are identifiable (roughly) with Fregean concept words. To do this latter would, it would seem, be to deny that there are relations or properties, not to assert that relations and properties etc. are objects too.

2.2

Now there is perhaps a way out here, a way of saving the suggestion that Fregean and Tractarian objects are importantly the same: Perhaps Wittgenstein can still be seen as involved in something like the Fregean proper name/concept word distinction, his Tractarian names being identifiable (roughly) with Fregean proper names, and then seen as denying reference to the Tractarian correlates of Fregean concept words – all this so long as we then take him to be using the words 'relation' and 'property' at page 61 of the Notebooks and in

the 1930 discussion with Lee (LWL p120) as terms for different sorts of objects (things referred to by (proper) names) rather than following Frege (Russell) in using them ('relation' and 'concept') as terms for the would-be referents of concept words. We could reject the move, made above, from 'There are relations and properties' to 'Relations and properties are what are referred to by relation- and property- words'.

Against this, let's for the moment merely note its unhappy exterior, and revert instead to the alternative mentioned above, that 'all things are objects' is tautologous, that 'object' like 'entity' or 'thing' connects not to any particular of a variety of basic logical types of expression, but merely to the idea of reference. This, we can note, does not stand at odds with the Fregean notion of an ontological variety: the possibility is left open, rather than contrasting objects with some other grouping of things, of dividing up the objects themselves. Indeed it will be my suggestion that this is precisely what Wittgenstein does – that an object has a form and that we may group together into an ontological category objects of the same form. To see this, let's start again with 2.01, focusing this time on the idea that objects combine to make states of affairs:

A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things).

It is essential to things that they should be possible constituents of states of affairs

In logic nothing is accidental: if a thing *can* occur in a state of affairs, the possibility of the state of affairs must be written into the thing itself. (2.01-2.012)

If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs. (Every one of these possibilities must be part of the nature of the object.) A new possibility cannot be discovered later.

If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties. (2.0123-2.01231)

The possibility of its occurring in states of affairs is the form of an object. (2.0141)

Objects make up the substance of the world. (2.021)

The substance of the world *can* only determine a form, and not any material properties. For it is only by means of propositions that material properties are represented – only by the configurations of objects that they are produced. (2.031)

If two objects have the same logical form, the only distinction between them, apart from their external properties, is that they are different.

Either a thing has properties that nothing else has, in which case we can immediately use a description to distinguish it from the others and refer to it; or, on the other hand, there are several things that have the whole set of their properties in common, in which case it is quite impossible to indicate one of them.

For if there is nothing to distinguish a thing, I cannot distinguish it, since otherwise it would be distinguished after all. (2.0233-2.02331)

Objects have internal and external properties. The internal properties of an object are the possibilities it has for combination with other objects to form states of affairs. These properties are borne necessarily by the object and are essential to, and exhaustive of, its nature.¹³ They constitute the object's logical form. The external (material) properties of an object are, by contrast, inessential and borne contingently; these are the combinations with other objects (to form states of affairs) the object actually enters into.¹⁴

Straightaway here, though, an obvious difficulty arises for the going interpretation under which relations are objects too: A state of affairs involving just two objects consists in those objects combined in a certain way. To be combined in a certain way, however, is, surely, to be related in a certain way, and so the state of affairs must actually involve three objects: the two initial objects and the combination relation. But then we may ask how these three objects

¹³ 'Exhaustive of' – this is the manner in which 'objects are colourless' (2.0233). Intrinsic to an object is only its logical form; it bears no material properties internally.

¹⁴ Worth noting at this point is that as two different Tractarian objects of the same logical form have the same internal nature, they will be distinguishable only by their external properties. Further, states of affairs are logically independent – 'From the existence or non-existence of one state of affairs it is impossible to infer the existence or non-existence of another' (2.062) – and so it is quite possible that two internally identical objects (two objects of the same form) should also be externally identical (combine in the same way with the same other objects), in which case they will be indistinguishable. Wittgenstein denies the principle of the discernability of non-identicals. (For this see also 5.5302:

are related when they combine as they do, and we would seem to have a nasty regress on our hands. Wittgenstein's response is to assert:

In a state of affairs objects fit into one another like the links of a chain.
(2.03)

(Immediately following: “‘Thing” and “relation” are on the same level’, we find in Lee’s notes above: ‘The objects hang as it were in a chain’ (LWL p130).) The connection of objects in a state of affairs is a *concatenation*. Such a connection is, if you like, not a worldly relation (such as loving or being next to), but an *immediate, logical* connection. When two (three etc.) objects combine to form a state of affairs, there is there no third (fourth etc.) object which is ‘the way they combine’. Wittgenstein writes, on page 26 of the Notebooks, that ‘the logical connexion’ between the elements of a situation ‘is not a relation, but only the *holding* of a relation’.

Now I want to suggest that much of this may usefully be compared with Frege: In Frege there is a variety of types of entity: there are the various types of concepts (a concept’s type being given by its order and the number of its argument places) and there are objects.¹⁵ These types (*forms*) are characterised by the possibilities their instances have (and have essentially) for combining with each other: an object may combine with (fall under, be subsumed under) a first order concept, and an n^{th} order concept may combine with (fall within) an $n+1^{\text{th}}$ order concept.¹⁶ Further, these combinations are *immediate* and involve no further entities:

This also creates the impression that the relation of subsumption is a third element supervenient upon the object and the concept. This isn’t the case; the unsaturatedness of the concept brings it about that the object, in effecting

¹⁵ ‘Russell’s definition of ‘=’ is inadequate, because according to it we cannot say that two objects have all their properties in common. (Even if this proposition is never true, it still has *sense*.)’

¹⁵ To repeat footnote 10 above: I am ignoring here for purposes of simplicity that Frege’s ontology includes functions which are not concepts.

¹⁶ This is a simplification; there is ‘a greater multiplicity’ (FC p147) than I suggest. Argument places for concepts do not distinguish merely between orders, but also between the number of arguments taken (‘a function of one argument is essentially so different from one of two arguments that the one function cannot occur as an argument in the same place as the other’ (FC p147)). And concepts of more than one argument place may not have a clear order in that its different argument places may be open to different orders (‘a function of two arguments may be of the same level in relation to them, or of different levels’ (FC p147)).

the saturation, engages immediately with the concept, without need of any special cement. (PMC p178)¹⁷

To repeat: Wittgenstein's ideas of object types and their combination are importantly similar to Frege's ideas of concept and object and falling under and falling within: Entities come in different forms;¹⁸ what form an entity has is a matter of what possibilities it has for combining with other entities; these possibilities are a matter of the entity's essential nature; and the combination of entities is immediate and logical as opposed to worldly.¹⁹ When this is taken on board, however, one question glares out: For Frege, objects and the variety of concept types constitute the available forms, but what forms does the Tractarian Wittgenstein imagine there to be? He speaks in the passages quoted at the end of section 2.1 of this chapter as if properties and relations might constitute forms of objects – is this to be taken seriously, and if so what is the full list?

2.3

To respond here we should first recall the linking in Frege, crossed above, between the ontological and the logical. The assertion that there is a variety of types of entity (objects and the different types of concepts) connects with the assertion that there is a variety of types of word (proper names and the different types of concept word). We have seen a similar connection hinted at when, in 2.0233, Wittgenstein calls an object's form – its combinatorial possibilities – its *logical* form. This demands exploration:

An elementary proposition, Wittgenstein asserts, consists of names (4.22, 5.55); it is a combination of names (4.0311). The combinatorial possibilities of names to form

¹⁷ See section 2.7 below for Wittgenstein's position vis-à-vis Frege's ideas of (un)saturation.

¹⁸ See here NB p59: 'We have become clear, then, that names may and do stand for the most various forms, and that it is only the syntactical application that signalises the form that is to be presented.'

¹⁹ There are, of course, important differences here too. For example: Frege, unlike Wittgenstein, allows that there be different kinds of entities of the same form; a Fregean entity's form (it's being, say, an object) does not exhaust its intrinsic nature. Further, when a Fregean object falls under a Fregean concept the two are not combining together to form a whole as Tractarian objects combine to form a state of affairs (though: the *sense* of a concept and the *sense* of an object do in some way combine to form a whole – the thought (see, e.g., BLA §32)). More still, for Frege the logical relations between the different types of entity all reduce (in some sense) to the relation of an object's falling under a concept – 'the fundamental logical relation is that of an object's falling under a concept: all relations between concepts can be reduced to this' (CSB p173); Wittgenstein does not envisage any such reduction amongst modes of object combination. Finally and not unrelatedly, Frege distinguishes (as we have just seen) between concepts and objects on grounds that the former but not the latter are in

(elementary) propositions is (elementary) logical grammar; the possibilities, essential to its identity, that a particular name has to combine with other names in propositions is the logical form of that name. More, in an elementary proposition (with a sense), the names refer to objects (3.22, 3.3), and the proposition asserts that the objects there named are combined in a certain way to form a state of affairs. But a name does not refer to just any object: a name refers to an object whose combinatorial possibilities to form states of affairs match exactly its own combinatorial possibilities to form propositions. If certain names name certain objects, then those objects may combine to form a state of affairs if and only if their names may, correspondingly, combine to form a proposition. And ‘correspondingly’ here means ‘identically’: a proposition consisting of certain names asserts that the objects there named are combined *in the same way* as the names are combined in the proposition (2.15, 3.21). Elementary propositions and the states of affairs they represent are ‘constructed according to a common logical pattern’ (4.014). (Thus: an elementary proposition ‘is a nexus, a concatenation, of names’; it ‘consist[s] of names in immediate combination’ (4.22).) We may identify the (metaphysical) form of an object and the (logical) form of a name which refers to it: they are the same logical/metaphysical possibilities of the same logical/metaphysical structures.

Returning with this in hand²⁰ to the matter of what forms of objects there are, we can recast our question as: what forms of names are there? Or equivalently: what forms of elementary propositions are there (an elementary proposition’s form being given by the forms of the names of which it consists)?

Here, it might be thought, we may look to the idea employed by both Wittgenstein and Frege of a concept script (*Begriffsschrift*): A concept script is a language whose syntax is logical syntax – a language, that is, whose propositions are such that we may identify their syntactic elements with their logical elements. To see what propositional forms each of Frege and Wittgenstein holds there to be we therefore need only look at the nature of the concept script each provides. Turning with this in mind to Frege we find, as anticipated, a concept script based in an idea of a concept word/proper name syntax. But whilst we find, on thumbing through the *Tractatus*, an endorsement of the general idea of a concept script (3.325), we

some sense ‘unsaturated’. See sections 2.5ff. below for how this connects and contrasts with Wittgenstein.

²⁰ Much more on these matters in chapter 3. The aim for the moment is only to set out the uncontentious minimum for the work of this chapter.

nowhere come across any particular such construction. Wittgenstein, it might seem, is keeping his cards tight up to his chest. Such suspicion, however, is not borne out by the text. On the contrary, Wittgenstein directly poses himself the challenge:

We now have to answer a priori the question about all the possible forms of elementary propositions. (5.55)

Which, subsequently, he does not duck, but rather *rejects* as misplaced:

The *application* of logic decides what elementary propositions there are.

What belongs to its application, logic cannot anticipate.

It is clear that logic must not clash with its application.

Therefore logic and its application must not overlap.

If I cannot say a priori what elementary propositions there are, then the attempt to do so must lead to obvious nonsense. (5.557-5.5571)

There is no saying a priori what forms of elementary propositions there are, and so no saying a priori what types of objects there are. Our demand at the end of the last section for a list of (onto)logical categories was, at least as an a priori request, misguided. But what notion of ‘a priori’ is Wittgenstein employing here? And why is it a mistake to attempt ‘a priori’ to sort out the elementary propositional forms? At work here is an opposition between logic and its application: the application of logic decides what elementary propositions there are; logic cannot anticipate what belongs to its application, and so it cannot anticipate what elementary forms there are. But what is logic in this context? And what is its application?

2.4

The Tractarian Wittgenstein believed in something he called *analysis* – a general procedure which applies to propositions of natural language. Applying the procedure to any one such proposition is analysing, or performing an analysis of, that proposition. More: analysis is truth functional – in an analysis what one achieves is an uncovering of how the proposition being analysed is composed, truth functionally, out of other truth functionally simpler propositions. And crucially there is such a thing as a *complete* analysis of a proposition in which it is uncovered how the proposition is composed out of truth functionally *simple* propositions – out, that is of elementary propositions.

Connecting directly with this commitment is Wittgenstein's idea of a 'general propositional form'. For Wittgenstein every proposition is a truth functional construction out of elementary propositions (4.51, 5), the elementary propositions being truth functionally independent units. Further, there is the possibility of providing a general characterisation of a truth function (of the idea of a truth functional construction) – of providing, that is, something worth calling 'the general form of a proposition'. Indeed, a significant climax of the *Tractatus* is the provision of just such a characterisation (6).²¹ Analysis, then – the process defined by its achievement of uncovering truth functional structure –, is given to us in the *Tractatus*.²²

Putting this with sections 5.557-5.5571 above, the suggestion will be as follows: *Logic*, as Wittgenstein uses the word in 5.557, means *truth functionality*²³, and *the application of logic* means the performance of analysis. To apply logic, to apply the idea of a truth functional structure to a particular proposition, is to analyse, is to uncover what truth functional structure is had by that particular proposition. Wittgenstein's uses of 'a priori' (or 'a posteriori') in these contexts mean before (or after) the performance of analyses of natural language propositions. The assertion that the application of logic decides what forms of elementary propositions there are is thus the assertion that the elementary forms will become discernable only through the performance of analysis. A concept script will, in this way, become available only 'a posteriori'.

Extremely helpful to us in both confirming and padding out this interpretation is the following (lengthy) passage from *Some Remarks on Logical Form*:

If we try to analyze any given propositions we shall find in general that they are logical sums, products or other truth functions of simpler propositions. But our analysis, if carried far enough, must come to the point where it reaches propositional forms which are not themselves composed of simpler propositional forms. We must eventually reach the ultimate

²¹ This does not, of course, include the provision of elementary forms – elementary propositions feature in the general propositional form only as structureless atoms.

²² This is not to suggest that there is an immediately apparent *modus operandi* for the affair.

²³ In the *Tractatus*, all relations of logical entailment between propositions are relations resulting directly from their truth functional structure (5.13) (the elementary propositions are logically independent); what has to do with logical relations between propositions – 'logic' – is in this sense molecular.

connection of the terms, the immediate connection which cannot be broken without destroying the propositional form as such. The propositions which represent this ultimate connexion of terms I call, after B. Russell, atomic propositions. They, then, are the kernels of every propositions, *they* contain the material, and all the rest is only a development of this material. It is to them we have to look for the subject matter of propositions. It is the task of the theory of knowledge to find them and to understand their construction out of the words or symbols. This task is very difficult, and Philosophy has hardly yet begun to tackle it at some points. What method have we for tackling it? The idea is to express in an appropriate symbolism what in ordinary language leads to endless misunderstandings. That is to say, where ordinary language disguises logical structure, where it allows the formation of pseudopropositions, where it uses one term in an infinity of different meanings, we must replace it by a symbolism which gives a clear picture of the logical structure, excludes pseudopropositions, and uses its terms unambiguously. Now we can only substitute a clear symbolism for the unprecise one by inspecting the phenomena which we want to describe, thus trying to understand their logical multiplicity. That is to say, we can only arrive at a correct analysis by, what might be called, the logical investigation of the phenomena themselves, *i.e.*, in a certain sense *a posteriori*, and not by conjecturing about *a priori* possibilities. One is often tempted to ask from an *a priori* standpoint: What, after all, *can* be the only forms of atomic propositions, and to answer, *e.g.*, subject-predicate and the relational propositions with two or more terms further, perhaps, propositions relating predicates and relations to one another, and so on. But this, I believe, is mere playing with words. An atomic form cannot be foreseen. And it would be surprising if the actual phenomena had nothing more to teach us about their structure. To such conjectures about the structure of atomic propositions, we are led by our ordinary language, which uses the subject-predicate and the relational form. But in this our language is misleading. (SRLF pp.29-30)

Wittgenstein is quite explicit: we can only substitute 'a clear symbolism' (a concept script) for the unprecise one (ordinary language, English) through 'the logical investigation of the phenomena themselves' – through, that is, the (logical) analysis of ordinary language

propositions. And this does not mean merely that we can only write ordinary language propositions in a concept script by analysing those propositions, rather it means that it is only in analysing propositions that a concept script is developed.

In Tractatus 5.5571 Wittgenstein declares the a priori attempt to say what elementary forms there are certain to lead to nonsense; in *Some Remarks on Logical Form* he calls it ‘mere playing with words’²⁴. We may be led by the use in our ordinary language of certain grammatical forms (e.g. the subject-predicate form) into thinking that we can lay down the possible elementary logical forms before attending to any particular proposition, but it would be a mistake so to think – ‘in this our language is misleading’.²⁵ For Wittgenstein, Frege and Russell were misled in just this way when they wrote down their concept scripts.²⁶

Wittgenstein is fundamentally opposed to the idea that first one constructs a concept script (works out what propositional forms there are), and only subsequently writes (translates) propositions of English in the constructed symbolism (works out which of the possible propositional forms is had by some particular English sentence). Those are not the two steps of giving logic and then applying it. The two steps of giving logic and then applying it are rather to characterise truth functionality (molecular logic), and subsequently to uncover the truth functional structure of particular propositions. And it is only through the second of these that the possible propositional forms (the atomic forms) will become apparent.²⁷

²⁴ In WWK he considers it ‘just ridiculous’:

Now I think that there is one principle governing the whole domain of elementary propositions, and this principle states that one cannot foresee the form of elementary propositions. It is just ridiculous to think that we could make do with the ordinary structure of our everyday language, with subject-predicate, with dual relations, and so forth. ... Only when we analyse phenomena logically shall we know what form elementary propositions have.’ (WWK p42)

²⁵ See 4.002: ‘[I]t is not humanly possible to gather immediately from [everyday language] what the logic of language is’, for ‘the tacit conventions on which the understanding of language depends are enormously complicated’. These ‘enormously complicated tacit conventions’ are uncovered not by a quick inspection of the surface grammatical forms of English, but by analyses of particular English propositions.

²⁶ Their idea of an a priori *hierarchy* of elementary forms comes in for particular criticism in 5.556-5.5561.

²⁷ It may well be wondered at this point *which* propositions need be analysed in order to find the elementary forms. All of them? Without going into detail, we can note that the standard goal of an analysis will be to remove some particular philosophical misunderstanding, and sufficient to do this will be to get clear about the particular logical interrelations of certain propositions. If, however, the goal is to develop a fully adequate concept script (to get entirely clear about language (thought, the world) as a whole), then completely analysing *any* proposition will do the job. For to be completely clear about the identity of any one proposition (to know what truth function of what elementary propositions it is), is to be completely clear about the identity of all propositions. Wittgenstein is involved here with a species of holism:

So: when Wittgenstein said: “‘objects’ include relations’ (LWL p130), he was not offering any thesis to the effect that relations constitute a certain type of objects; the force rather was that ‘object’ is all encompassing – it does not exclude those things Frege or Russell would have down as relations. Objects (things, entities) do come in a variety of (logical, metaphysical) types, but the nature of these types is something which cannot be known in advance – Wittgenstein is, on this point, a principled agnostic.²⁸

2.5

A pause for thought. This chapter has been rather brisk on a number of matters. The target of investigation so far has been the idea of an object that it is an entity of reference; in pursuit of that we have stumbled rather quickly through a number of important ideas. Some of these, in particular the idea of a concept script and the idea of truth functional analysis, we shall unfortunately not be able to take any further in this thesis. Others, surrounding names and their combination to form propositions we shall pursue in the next chapter. Owing for this chapter on objects, however, is a more careful examination of another matter on which we were equally brief, namely that of the combination of objects to form atomic facts.

Objects are constituents of atomic facts (2.011); atomic facts are composed of objects (4.2211), are combinations of objects (2.01). This thesis of an atomic fact that it is a complex of objects is something Wittgenstein inherited from Russell, and it is through Russell’s work that we shall approach the matter as found in Wittgenstein. In the last chapter we looked briefly at the Russellian metaphysics of simples and complexes. This we must go through again, in more detail. Particularly, we shall be concerned with something we touched there only very lightly: the ‘unity of the proposition’.

A proposition can determine only one place in logical space: nevertheless the whole of logical space must already be given by it. (3.24)

If objects are given, then at the same time we are given *all* objects.

If elementary propositions are given, then at the same time *all* elementary propositions are given. (5.524)

²⁸ Find here an early version of the insistence that in order more clearly to see the workings of language ‘we must focus on the details of what goes on; must look at them *from close to*’ (PI 51). To lay down the atomic forms a priori is not to learn by looking at the details from close to.

So: Occurring, let's recall, in Russell's universe from 1903 through to 1918²⁹ are simples and also complexes, a complex being not simple in that it has parts (constituents):

We will give the name of "a *complex*" to any such object as "*a* in the relation *R* to *b*" or "*a* having the quality *q*" or "*a* and *b* and *c* standing in the relation *S*." Broadly speaking, a *complex* is anything which occurs in the universe and is not simple. (PM p44)

A "complex" is anything analysable, anything which has *constituents*. (TK p79)

If we take some particular dual complex xRy , this has three constituents, *x*, *R*, and *y*. (TK p114)

For example, "A differs from B" or "A's difference from B," is a complex of which the parts are A and B and difference. (POM p139)

The first thing for us here is to emphasise the following: that the constituents of the complex 'a in the relation R to b' are not merely a and b, but rather a, R and b. Occasionally, Russell does see to move away from this idea:

Wherever there is a relation which relates certain terms, there is a complex object formed of the union of those terms; and conversely, wherever there is a complex object, there is a relation which relates its constituents. (PP p74)

The constituents of the fact/complex 'Othello's love for Desdemona' are, the suggestion seems here to be, Othello and Desdemona; the fact consists of Othello and Desdemona – its constituents – related by the relation of loving. This take on matters is, however, in tension with the idea that the truth of a judgment that Othello loves Desdemona consists in the existence of a 'complex of the objects of the judgment' (PM p44 above, my italics), for the objects of the judgment are three – Othello, love and Desdemona (see chapter 1 above). More, it makes problematic the idea of the complex '*a* having the quality *q*' ('the redness of this' (PM p44)) – threatening here would seem to be the contradictory idea of a complex of

²⁹ From *The Principles of Mathematics* (POM) through to *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* (PLA).

just one constituent. In fact it is clear that Russell thought throughout of relations as constituents of complexes. Earlier on in *The Problems of Philosophy* he had written:

We may therefore now assume it to be true that nothing mental is presupposed in the fact that Edinburgh is north of London. But this fact involves the relation 'north of', which is a universal; and it would be impossible for the whole fact to involve nothing mental if the relation 'north of', which is a constituent part of the fact, did involve anything mental. (PP p56)

Passages suggesting otherwise are anomalies. Scattered all over his work from 1903 to 1918 are such remarks as:

The things in the world have various properties, and stand in various relations to each other. That they have these properties and relations are *facts*, and the things and their qualities or relations are quite clearly in some sense or other components of the facts... (PLA p192)

So the constituents of the Russellian fact that *a* is in relation *R* to *b* are *a*, *R* and *b*. *R* is in some sense an entity which goes with *a* and *b* to make up the complex 'a in *R* to *b*'. With this, a preliminary point of this excursion back to Russell should now be clear: Wittgenstein, I suggest, took over an idea of atomic facts as complexes of which the constituents are not entities restricted to one particular type, are not entities corresponding to one particular logical type of expression (e.g. Fregean proper names), but rather are entities drawn from a variety of different types. Wittgenstein's chief modification to this Russellian idea, the suggestion is, was to deny that we can specify a priori what logical types of things (constituents of atomic facts) there are. What, we should now ask though, was Russell's 'a priori' ontology?

Well, we can recall from chapter 1 that the parts of a Russellian complex are not all parts in the same way. Russell has a theory of the constitution of complexes under which not all components of a complex figure there in the same manner. This is as follows: An entity may figure in a complex either as a term or as a relation. In any (atomic) complex, one entity appears as a relation and all the others as terms; if there are *n* entities appearing as terms in a

complex, then the entity appearing as relation appears there as an n-ary relation. And this theory yields the following fundamental logical kinds of entities: *term*, an entity which may feature as a term in a complex, and *n-ary relation*, an entity which may feature as an n-ary relation in a complex. A unary relation we call a predicate; relations of any order we call universals; terms which are not universals we call particulars:

In any complex, there are at least two kinds of constituents, namely the terms related, and the relation which unites them. ... In (say) "A precedes B", A and B occur differently from the way in which "precedes" occurs. ... An entity which *can* occur in a complex as "precedes" occurs in "A precedes B" will be called a *relation*. When it *does* occur in this way in a complex, it will be called a "relating relation" in that complex. ...

Atomic complexes may be classified according to the number of terms other than the relating relation that they contain; we will call them *dual* complexes if they contain two terms, and so on. Relations may be similarly classified: relations which can be relating in dual complexes will be called *dual* relations, and so on. ...

It may be that there are complexes in which there is only one term and one predicate, where the predicate occurs as relations occur in other complexes. In that case, predicates will be defined as entities occurring in this manner in complexes containing only one other entity. ...

Relations and predicates together will be called "universals". All the constituents of a complex are either particular or universal, and at least one must be universal. (TK pp.80-81)

A particular is defined as an entity which can only enter into complexes as the subject of a predicate or as one of the terms of a relation, never as itself a predicate or a relation. (TK pp. 55-56)

So an atomic complex is composed of n terms and an n-ary relation – those are its constituents. But how, the question stands out, are they *constituents*? What is this *composition* of theirs? A complex is to have a *unity* beyond the mere set of its constituents; in what does this unity consist? This basic issue exercised Russell greatly throughout his work in logic; tracing the answers he offers will, I think we shall see, provide a useful context

in which to set Wittgenstein's Tractarian idea of an object that it is a possible constituent of atomic facts.

2.6

Over the period 1903-1918, Russell offers three distinct responses to the issue of the unity of a complex (which will be referred to below as that of an early, a middle and a late Russell).

First up, we find:

Owing to the way in which the verb [the relation] actually relates the terms of a proposition [a complex], every proposition has a unity which renders it distinct from the sum of its constituents. (POM p52)

'A's hatred for B', for example, is a complex in which *hatred* combines A and B into one whole. (RUP p108)

Whenever a relation holds between two or more terms, it unites the terms into a complex whole. (PP p74)

The suggestion of the early Russell, then, is that a complex's unity is effected by its relation. In a complex the relation actually relates the terms, and in so doing unites them together with itself into a whole. The relation, we might say, is as cement to the terms' bricks (PP p74). Stating this idea, however, we must take a little care, for Russell also holds that there may in fact be more than one relation occurring in an atomic complex. That is to say: relations may appear in complexes not just as relations but also as terms; just as do particulars, universals may stand as terms in relation to each other.³⁰ (Indeed, in every judgment complex there is a universal featuring as a term ('when we judge (say) "this is red," what occurs is a relation of three terms, the mind, and "this," and red' (PM p43)).) More carefully put, then, the suggestion is going to be that it is the entity *appearing* as relation that effects the complex's unity. Unfortunately for Russell, however, his theory that universals are terms too is going to render this response problematic.

Before seeing how, however, we can briefly inspect why is it that Russell insists on universals being terms too. One motivation, perhaps, is the obligation its denial would incur

of finding non-atomic forms for the complexes corresponding to such sentences as ‘Red is similar to orange’, ‘Patience is a virtue’ etc., but the root is deeper than that. Whilst Russell does not place here the explicit emphasis of Frege or Wittgenstein, it is nonetheless central for him that the parts of the expression of an elementary judgment correspond to the elements of the judgment’s objective. Specifically, the expression of an elementary judgment (an elementary sentence) contains a verb/adjective and a number of proper names; the verb/adjective there denotes the entity appearing as relation in the objective, the proper names there denote its terms.³¹ A term, we should see, is thus something which can be given a *proper name*, is something which can be made the *subject* of a sentence. And that, of course, is *everything*: the very idea of a thing which cannot be the subject of a statement, is self contradictory – to say that object o cannot be the subject of a statement is to make a statement *about* object o, a statement which has as its subject the object o:

Whatever may be an object of thought, or may occur in any true or false proposition, or can be counted as *one*, I call a *term*. ... [A]nything that can be mentioned, is sure to be a term; and to deny that such a thing is a term must always be false. (POM p43)

The idea of a term is, for Russell, the idea of something about which we can make true or false assertions, and that, on pain of contradiction, must be everything.³² Universals, then, are terms too; a relation may occur in a complex not just as a relation but also as a term. What may act as cement in one complex may be a brick for another. Now as said above this dual nature is going to render problematic the account given of the unity of a complex; to see how we need first to note that these two guises – as term and as relation – are not both equally *guises*.

In the *Principles of Mathematics* Russell writes:

³⁰ See, e.g., RA p135.

³¹ See *Theory of Knowledge* p110: ‘An atomic proposition may, for the present, be defined as one whose verbal expression is of the same form as that of an atomic complex’.

³² Criticism is made in POM (see particularly pp. 507 and 510) of Frege who insists that a concept cannot be referred to by the logical subject of a proposition (a proper name). As Russell points out, Frege cannot even state that theory without doing precisely what it says cannot be done. This Frege notes, remarking that what we have here is an unavoidable ‘awkwardness of language’ (CO p185).

The twofold nature of the verb, as actual verb and as verbal noun, may be expressed, if all verbs are held to be relations, as the difference between a relation *in itself* and a relation actually relating. (POM p49, my italics)

And he says that he 'will use synonymous with [the word term] the words unit, individual, and entity' (POM p43). An entity occurring as a term of a complex is occurring there *in and of itself*; to occur as a term in a complex is to occur in the world as a self-standing unit. If any complex in which an entity appears as a term were to break up around it, its occurrence in the universe would continue unaffected. An entity occurring as relation in a complex, by contrast, is not standing there inertly by itself: it is occurring there as, essentially, a part of that complex – it is there going between, actually relating, the complex's terms. The bricks and cement metaphor of *The Problems of Philosophy* is thus particularly apt: the terms, the bricks, stand there as independent units, but there is in the world no cement, no entity occurring as relation, without bricks there cemented together. And this contrast between the two modes of occurrence in a complex is, we should see, essential to the idea that it is the relation and not the terms which unify the complex. If the occurrence of the relation were, as that of the terms, one of an entity standing on its own, then the complex would consist only of a variety of self-standing, independent entities – it would, that is to say, amount to nothing more than the mere collection of those entities.

Still, difficulty arises for Russell with the unity of complexes from the fact that whilst the *occurrence* of an entity as a relation is an occurrence essentially within a complex, nonetheless the relation there occurring is in itself a term existing in the world independently of any complex. What we have with Russell here is the idea that a relation is *a brick doing duty as cement between other bricks*. And this proves problematic for if the constituents of a complex are, in themselves, all bricks, then what we get if we analyse that complex into its individual constituents is, precisely, a series of bricks. A series of bricks, however, does not make for a wall: for a wall we need cement:

Consider, for example, the proposition "A differs from B." The constituents of this proposition, if we analyze it, appear to be only A, difference, B. Yet these constituents, thus placed side by side, do not reconstitute the

'We cannot avoid words like 'the concept', but where we use them we must always bear their inappropriateness in mind' (CSB p174). Russell, by contrast, refuses such manoeuvres.

proposition. The difference which occurs in the proposition actually relates A and B, whereas the difference after analysis is a notion which has no connection with A and B. ... A proposition, in fact, is essentially a unity, and when analysis has destroyed the unity, no enumeration of constituents will restore the proposition. (POM pp.49-50)

A proposition has a certain indefinable unity, in virtue of which it is an assertion; and this is so completely lost by analysis that no enumeration of constituents will restore it, even though itself be mentioned as a constituent. There is, it must be confessed, a grave logical difficulty in this fact, for it is difficult not to believe that a whole must be constituted by its constituents. (POM pp.466-467)

If we break up a complex into its elements, then we are left, the problem is, with entities which do not fit back together to form the complex. We thus seem to be forced into saying that the complex's constituents are after all insufficient (inappropriate) in themselves for a unity as opposed to a mere set as they include no cement, no unifying element.³³

In response to this 'grave logical difficulty', Russell – the 'middle Russell' now – moves to suggest that the unity of a complex is effected not by any of its elements but rather by something else – by a logical form. The whole is not, after all, constituted by its constituents. As early as 1904, Russell had considered the suggestion that a complex is 'a unity formed by certain constituents combined in a certain manner' (OF p98), where 'the mode of combination of the constituents of a complex is not itself one of the constituents of the complex' (OF p98). By 1913, this 'mode of combination' is being called the 'form': 'aRb consists of a and R and b united in the general form of a dual complex' (TK p128). What, though, is this 'form'?

³³ To respond that one of the constituents, one of the bricks, can be turned into cement and then used to bond the others together would be to misunderstand. Taking the complex apart, what was cement immediately solidifies into a brick – and it is as a brick that it must stay, just so long as it is (considered as) something apart from other things. In itself, the cement is not cement at all but a brick. Another approach to Russell's difficulty here is to find that if the cement must be thought of as being, at the same time, a brick, then the question seems possible: what holds the cement-brick to the other bricks?, and a Bradleian regress is threatened. Further exploration of Russell's difficulty is not, however, possible in this chapter. (See Linsky 1992 for a more detailed examination.)

Well, it is insisted throughout that the a complex's form is not itself a constituent of that complex:

It is obvious, in fact, that when *all* the constituents of a complex have been enumerated, there remains something which may be called the "form" of the complex, which is the way in which the constituents are combined in the complex. (TK p98)

More positively, we are told:

For example, the form of all subject-predicate complexes will be the fact that "something has some predicate"; the form of all dual complexes will be "something has some relation to something". (TK p114)

So the complex 'aRb' is analysed now into its constituents a, R and b, and its form $(\exists x, \Lambda, y)(x \text{ stands in } \Lambda \text{ to } y)$. But still, what is this form? It is, we are told, a constituentless fact (TK p114), but is it then, say, a term? Well, Russell is keen to assert that it is 'not a "thing"' (TK p98); he does, however, call it a 'logical object' (TK p99). Frank as ever, Russell admits that 'it is not at all clear what is the right account of "form"' (TK p99). The point to note here is that he is under great pressure to admit forms both as terms, pressure stemming from within his theory of judgment as well as from the general argument above to the effect that everything must be a term.³⁴ But if this is done – which it is (TK pp. 99, 113 etc.) – the difficulty faced by the early Russell would seem to remain unmet: the form of a complex will be a self-subsistent entity just as its constituents, and so the results of an analysis of a complex will again be a mere series of entities standing there individually, inappropriate for a unity beyond their mere sum. Such remarks as that 'it is more correct to say [of a form] that it *is* a structure' (TK p114) are so much flailing around.

In a letter of January 1913 Wittgenstein makes an alternative criticism of this theory. The letter is of interest to us more by virtue of the alternative Wittgenstein offers than by the criticism he makes of Russell's theory:

³⁴ Forms are required in 1913 to stand as terms of judgment relations in order to address a problem of unity in thought (see TK p116 and chapter 1 above). See OF pp. 98, 99 for assertions that the denial of a form that it is a term would be self contradictory.

I have changed my views on “atomic” complexes: I now think that qualities, relations (like love) etc. are all copulae! That means I for instance analyse a subject-predicate proposition, say “Socrates is human” into “Socrates” and “something is human”, (which I think is not complex). The reason for this is a very fundamental one: I think that there cannot be different Types of things! In other words whatever can be symbolised by a simple proper name must belong to one type. And further: every theory of types must be rendered superfluous by a proper theory of the symbolism: For instance if I analyse the proposition Socrates is mortal into Socrates, mortality and $(\exists x, y) \in_1(x, y)$ I want a theory of types to tell me that “mortality is Socrates” is nonsensical, to prevent me making the substitution the wrong way round. But if I analyse (as I do now) into Socrates and $(\exists x).x$ is mortal or generally into x and $(\exists x). \phi x$ * it becomes impossible to substitute the wrong way round because the two symbols are now of a different *kind* themselves.

* Props which I formerly wrote $\in_2(a, R, b)$ I now write $R(a, b)$ and analyse them into a, b , and $(\exists x, y)R(x, y)$ [which last is] not complex. (CL pp. 24-25)

Ignoring the theory of types/theory of symbolism ideas, we can note that Wittgenstein is advocating a position in which the Russell’s copulating form is subsumed into his (at that time) non-copulating relation (or predicate) to make a copulating relation constituent. Now this might seem merely to return us right back to where we were before the idea of form was introduced, to the early Russell, but let’s note that the copulating constituent R of that early theory has now been replaced by $(\exists x, y)R(x, y)$. What importance has this? Well recall that the whole purpose of the logical form was to act as copula, that copulation was to be *essential* to it – the logical form of a complex was to be, precisely, the mode of combination of the constituents. (The problem with this for Russell was that he could not fit such ‘modes of combination’ into his theories without thereby turning them into terms – into things which are not essentially copulating – and so removing from them their means of accounting for unity.) What Wittgenstein is suggesting, then, by writing $(\exists x, y) R(x, y)$ rather than R as the third constituent of the complex is that what we have here is a constituent which is *essentially copulating* – a constituent *which is not a term*, a constituent *which does not stand on its own*. Relations, he says, *are* copulae. Wittgenstein is thus mooted the possibility that there are things (constituents of complexes) which are not terms, but rather are essentially copulative.

This suggestion goes directly against Russell's earlier argument (and, I think, earlier sentiment) that everything must be a term, must be capable of being made the subject of a proposition. Nevertheless it is something which he comes to embrace, making important adjustments to his system in order to accommodate it. In his 1918 lectures entitled *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, Russell declares that 'a relation can never occur except as a relation, never as a subject' (PLA p206), and he (re)defines particulars with

Particulars = terms of relations in atomic facts. Df. (PLA p199)

More, it is asserted:

Particulars have this peculiarity, among the sort of objects that you have to take account of in an inventory of the world, that each of them stands entirely alone and is completely self-subsistent. It has that sort of self-subsistence that used to belong to substance, except that it usually only persists through a very short time, so far as our experience goes. That is to say, each particular that there is in the world does not in any way logically depend upon any other particular. There is no reason why you should not have a universe consisting of one particular and nothing else. That is a peculiarity of particulars. In the same way, in order to understand a name for a particular, the only thing necessary is to be acquainted with that particular. When you are acquainted with that particular, you have a full, adequate, and complete understanding of the name, and no further information is required. (PLA p201)

With relations, by contrast, we have that:

Understanding a predicate is quite a different thing from understanding a name. ... To understand a name you must be acquainted with the particular of which it is a name, and you must know that it is the name of that particular. You do not, that is to say, have any suggestion of the form of a proposition, whereas in understanding a predicate you do. To understand 'red', for instance, is to understand what is meant by saying that a thing is

red. ... Exactly the same applies to relations, and in fact all those things that are not particulars. Take, e.g., 'before' in 'x is before y': you understand 'before' when you understand what that would mean if x and y were given. (PLA p205)

This, as I've said, is an important change of heart.³⁵ Where before both universals and particulars were 'possessed of all the properties commonly assigned to substances' (POM p44) – self-subsistence, logical independence, logical subjecthood – now this character withheld from universals. Unlike particulars, universals are not now objects of a dual acquaintance relation: we cannot simply get hold of (apprehend) a universal and associate with it a (proper) name. To know a universal is not to know what that entity is in itself: rather, to know a universal is to know what it is for that entity to be a constituent in a complex. And correspondingly to understand a sign for a universal is to understand what is meant by expressions of (atomic) judgments in which that sign figures. The link here between language and the world is worth restating: To know a particular is to be acquainted with what that entity is in itself; to know a universal is to know what it is for that universal to figure in (atomic) complexes. To understand a sign for a particular is to know what the sign stands for; to understand a sign for a universal is to know what is asserted by an atomic statement in which the sign figures. Thus we could say: whilst the sign for a particular, Cassio, is a self-standing name, 'Cassio', the sign for a universal, love, is a propositional function (an open sentence) 'x loves y'.

And the difficulties Russell faced above are now solved thus: Analysis leaves us not with a series of self-standing entities, but with a number of such entities and also a non-self-standing copulator. Placing the constituents of the complex alongside each other, we find that the particulars immediately *slot into* the universal to form the unity required. Borrowing terminology from Frege, we could say that the late Russell's particulars are saturated and his

³⁵ Though it is not entirely without ancestry:

Whatever exactly may be meant by "understanding" the world "before", it is plain that such understanding enables us to distinguish between the two propositions "A is before B" and "B is before A". This fact shows that, in the understanding of the abstract "before", which is what we are trying to isolate, there must be some kind of reference to terms, something, in fact, which we call "sense" or "direction". ... (TK p86)

The new position is, moreover, maintained. For this see particularly the introduction to the second (1925) edition of *Principia Mathematica* pp. xix-xx.

universals unsaturated.³⁶ Rather than dwelling at length on this late Russellian position, however, let's turn now to Wittgenstein and ask: how, in the *Tractatus*, is the unity of atomic facts accounted for?

2.7

An atomic fact, we are told in the *Tractatus*, is a combination of objects (2.01), is composed of objects (4.2211), has objects as constituents (2.011). But what manner of combination/composition/constitution is this?

Ignoring, for the moment, the conclusions of the first half of this chapter (sections 2.1-2.4), we might well, noticing both the Wittgensteinian heritage of the late Russellian position and also the Tractarian remark that 'objects make up the substance of the world' (2.021), look for an assimilation of Tractarian objects to late Russellian particulars. Objects are combined together to form states of affairs by 'relations', such as 'love' or 'being next to', which are not themselves objects but rather are essentially copulative (are copulas) and so insubstantial. Awkwardness arises for this idea, though, with the remark:

In a state of affairs, objects stand in a determinate relation to one another.

The determinate way in which objects are connected in a state of affairs is the structure of the state of affairs. (2.031-2.032)

It seems unhappy to say that the way in which objects a and b are connected in the state of affairs that a is next to b – the way two things are connected when one is next to the other – is the *structure* of that state of affairs. An entirely different structure would have to be posited for the state of affairs that a is touching b. The idea of a structure is, surely, the idea of something abstract, something formal; the relation of being next to, even if it is insubstantial,

³⁶ See CO p193: 'For not all parts of a thought can be complete; at least one must be unsaturated or predicative; otherwise they would not hold together.' I focus on Russell rather than Frege with the question of unity because the concern in both Russell and Wittgenstein is with the unity of complexes operating at the level of reference (complexes of objects of reference). The wholes and parts which Frege deals with, by contrast, arise at the level of sense – the senses of the elements of a proposition go together to form a thought. Of course, Frege does talk of (un)saturation at the level of reference, writing: 'A concept is unsaturated in that it requires something to fall under it; hence it cannot exist on its own' (LM p81), but as it is not the case that when an object falls under a concept there is some unity of concept-and-object there constructed it is slightly mysterious what that talk might there mean. This he seems to acknowledge in a footnote to CSB: 'The words 'unsaturated' and 'predicative' seem more suited to the sense than the referent; still there must be something on the part of the referent which corresponds to this, and I know of no better words' (CSB p174).

seems to be considerably more concrete, more material. Of course, this is far from conclusive, but let's for the moment see it as pressure to move Wittgenstein back towards the second Russell in which the 'way in which entities are connected in a fact' is some sort of logical copula, a 'logical form' – something Russell himself called a structure (TK p114). Here the interpretation might begin to seem more plausible. The combination of objects to form states of affairs is an immediate, logical combination; the objects are combined together in a certain logical form – they occupy different positions within a certain logical structure. With this we can accommodate Wittgenstein's claim that 'relations and properties, etc. are *objects* too' (NB p61) – entities (objects) of all logical types serve as constituents of atomic facts.

We start to stumble, however, with both of these suggestions when it is asked: what, for Wittgenstein, is this copula – formal or material – 'in' an atomic complex beside its constituent objects. For Wittgenstein, the problem is, fails even to consider such a question. If we think that Wittgenstein has unnameable copulae (formal or otherwise) responsible for the unity of atomic facts, then we need to show passages in the *Tractatus* in which Wittgenstein exposes this theory. But there are no such passages. What we find, rather, is:

In the atomic fact objects hang one in another, like the links of a chain.
(2.03)

In an atomic fact objects *hang one in another*, like the links of a chain. The objects of an atomic fact are not held together by some further copula: rather, *they hold themselves together*. They are not ball bearings stuck together with some glue, but links of a chain holding each other together. The idea that the unity 'a next to b' consists of objects a and b held together by the 'being next to' relation (which is not an object) has to be rejected, as does the theory that it consists of the objects a, being next to and b held together by a logical copula (the general form of the dual complex, or whatever). Both of those suggestions have it that it is something other than the objects which is responsible for the unity of atomic facts. Wittgenstein's insistence, however, is that it is the objects themselves which are so responsible.³⁷

³⁷ This explanation is, as we saw above, repeated at a later date:
2.01. "An atomic fact is a combination of objects (entities, things)". ... The objects hang as it were in a chain. (LWL p120)

On reading a preliminary translation of his *Tractatus* by C. K. Ogden in which Ogden had rendered section 2.03 with 'In the atomic fact objects hang one *on* another, like the links of a chain' (my italics), Wittgenstein made the correction:

Here instead of "hang one on another" it should be "hang one in another" as the links of a chain *do*! The meaning is *that there isn't anything third* that connects the links but that the links *themselves* make connexion with one another. So if "in" in this place is English please put it there. If one would hang *on* the other they might also be glued together. (LO p23)

The objects are not glued together, they hang *in* each other: they themselves do the copulating. And what this means, of course, is that *Tractarian objects are not self-standing units*. Throughout the above work with Russell we were driven by the fact that what is self-standing cannot copulate, cannot be responsible for a unity beyond itself; what copulates, what is responsible for a unity beyond itself, cannot (there) be self-standing. Thus to say that the objects are themselves jointly responsible for the unity of the fact of which they are the constituents is to say that those objects do not appear in that fact as self-standing units. More, as Wittgenstein is not, as at times was Russell, involved in any kind of dual role theory, it follows that objects occur in the world only as parts of complexes – Tractarian objects are essentially copulative, dependent, incomplete.

A deeper understanding of this conclusion is afforded by proper consideration of the *Tractatus*' opening passage on objects:

2.011 It is essential to things that they should be possible constituents of states of affairs.

2.012 In logic nothing is accidental: if a thing can occur in a state of affairs, the possibility of the state of affairs must be written into the thing itself.

2.0121 It would seem to be a sort of accident, if it turned out that a situation would fit a thing that could already exist entirely on its own.

If things can occur in states of affairs, this possibility must be in them from the beginning.

(Nothing in the province of logic can be merely possible. Logic deals with every possibility and all possibilities are its facts.)

Just as we are quite unable to imagine spatial objects outside space or temporal objects outside time, so too there is *no* object that we can imagine apart from the possibility of combining with others.

If I can imagine objects combined in states of affairs, I cannot imagine them apart from the *possibility* of such combinations.

This is an important passage whose full weight is not always felt. We have here two contrasting ideas: that an object has an essential nature which fits it to be a constituent of states of affairs, and that an object's essential nature consists in its being a possible constituent of states of affairs. What Wittgenstein is doing is rejecting the former and endorsing the latter.

To see this, let's model the former: Instead of objects take two-dimensional shapes, and instead of states of affairs (atomic facts), take regular tessellations of the plane using finitely many (but at least two) shapes. Here we can say that it is of the essence of certain of our shapes that they can combine together to form a certain regular tessellation. What certain shapes are suit them to combine with each other in those ways which they can in fact fit together. Nonetheless, what a shape is does not consist in its possibilities for such combinations. As Wittgenstein puts it, it is 'a sort of accident' that certain shapes can tessellate together; the possibility of tessellation together that certain shapes have is a 'mere possibility', one which can be 'discovered later' (2.0123), as opposed to one 'written into' what those shapes are – into the very idea of those shapes – 'at the very beginning'. We can imagine a shape – we can have it there in thought – independently of any idea of its possible tessellations (we may not even have come across the idea of such structures!).

All this Wittgenstein rejects of objects. The possibilities of an object to occur in facts are constitutive of, rather than resultant from, its essential nature. Those possibilities are no kind of accident about the object to be 'discovered later': rather, they are written into the object from the very beginning. Objects do not, this is to say, stand alone, independently, with natures which (happen to!) fit them to combine together; rather what an object is, in essence, is a possible part of facts. An object's internal nature is a matter not of how something is, but of how things *could be*. What an object is is given by a set of possibilities not a set of

actualities; there is no actuality in which an object's possibilities for combination are grounded; an object is, essentially, incomplete.

To drive the matter still harder home, let's turn quickly to the linguistic aspect. We saw above that to understand a sign for a late Russellian universal (something essentially unsaturated) was to understand, given the meanings of relevant other signs, what is said by (atomic) propositions in which it figures. It's worth rereading the passage in question:

Understanding a predicate is quite a different thing from understanding a name. ... To understand a name you must be acquainted with the particular of which it is a name, and you must know that it is the name of that particular. You do not, that is to say, have any suggestion of the form of a proposition, whereas in understanding a predicate you do. To understand 'red', for instance, is to understand what is meant by saying that a thing is red. ... Exactly the same applies to relations, and in fact all those things that are not particulars. Take, e.g., 'before' in 'x is before y': you understand 'before' when you understand what that would mean if x and y were given. (PLA p205)

Going hand in hand with universals being essentially parts of facts is that the understanding of symbols for them involves 'suggestion of the form of a proposition' – the form of propositions, that is, in which that symbol occurs. Looking now at the *Tractatus*, let's note first that names (symbols for objects) are *expressions*: 'I call any part of a proposition that characterises its sense an expression' (3.31) and then that:

3.311 An expression presupposes the forms of all the propositions in which it can occur. It is the common characteristic mark of a class of propositions.

3.312 It is therefore presented by means of the general form of the propositions that it characterizes.

In fact, in this form the expression will be *constant* and everything else *variable*.

3.313 Thus an expression is presented by means of a variable whose values are the propositions that contain the expression.

(In the limiting case the variable becomes a constant, the expression becomes a proposition.)

I call such a variable a 'propositional variable'.

A Tractarian expression for an object (a name), just as a late Russellian expression for a universal, presupposes the forms of propositions in which it can occur, and, just as a late Russellian expression for a universal, is presented by means of a propositional variable whose values are precisely those propositions. (The only clear difference here (a minor one) is that a Russellian universal can figure in (atomic) facts of only one form; that presumption is not made in Wittgenstein – the name presupposes the forms (plural) of all propositions in which it can occur.) To understand a Tractarian name is to understand what would be asserted by propositions in which it figures, and what this means, I want to suggest again, is that as late Russellian universals are incomplete, so too are the Tractarian objects.

So to repeat: Whilst the late Russell (under the influence of the pre-Tractarian Wittgenstein) had certain constituents of atomic facts (the universals) down as essentially incomplete, as logically dependent, as figuring in the world as, essentially, parts of complexes (and in no other way), the Tractarian Wittgenstein has all constituents of atomic facts, objects of all types, down in this way. And whilst the late Russell uses the incompleteness of his universals to account for the unity of facts, for Wittgenstein that unity is a product together of the incompleteness of all the fact-constituents – the objects all hang one in another.

Finally for this section we should notice and make good on a certain debt that this conclusion incurs: If the Tractarian objects are incomplete, what, then, is *complete* for the Tractatus? What, if not an object, is it that occurs in the Tractarian world as a self-standing unit? Well, recall section 3.313 above:

Thus an expression is presented by means of a variable whose values are the propositions that contain the expression.

(In the limiting case the variable becomes a constant, the expression becomes a proposition.) (3.313)

The unit of language, Wittgenstein remarks later of his Tractatus, is not the name but the proposition (LWL p119). And the context of this later remark is Tractatus 1.1:

The world is the totality of facts, not of things. (1.1)

The independent, self-standing units of the world are, Wittgenstein asserts, not things but rather the complexes things constitute: facts. Objects do not go together to make something whose reality is, as theirs, dependent, and whose nature is, as theirs, a matter of possibilities; the unity that is formed by the copulation together of objects is rather an *independent* unity, a unity whose nature consists of an actuality. Whilst objects are arrived at in the world only derivatively, by 'looking inside' facts, the facts themselves are come across directly – the facts stand by themselves as independent elements of the totality which is the world.³⁸

An analogy, then, of open hands and closed fists: If we take an atomic fact of just two elements, the late Russell will have one of those two (the particular) as a fist (a closed unit) and the second (the universal) as an open hand which may close onto the first to form a complex closed unit; Wittgenstein by contrast will have two open hands which hold each other, close onto each other, to form the complex closed unit which is the fact.³⁹

2.8

In conclusion, then, a brief review of how I suggest Tractarian objects are to be contrasted with Fregean objects, and with Russellian terms or particulars.

Frege is involved in a ontological variety of entities of reference corresponding rigidly to a logical variety of expressions. Expressions of a certain logical type may refer to, and only to, entities of a corresponding ontological type. Wittgenstein too envisages such varieties

³⁸ A slight misalignment of this thought with what Wittgenstein actually writes in Tractatus 1.1 is his use there of *Tatsache* (fact) rather than *Sachverhalt* (atomic fact). In a letter to Russell of 19.8.19 Wittgenstein writes:

“What is the difference between a *Tatsache* and a *Sachverhalt*?” *Sachverhalt* is, what corresponds to an *Elementarsatz* if it is true. *Tatsache* is what corresponds to the logical product of elementary props when this product is true. The reason why I introduce *Tatsache* before introducing *Sachverhalt* would want a long explanation. (CL p125)

I wish very much that Wittgenstein had nonetheless taken the trouble to give the explanation.

³⁹ This may not be quite right for Russell: it is not clear in PLA that facts and particulars are 'closed' in the same manner. Russell has taken enough from Wittgenstein by this time to deny that facts are (complex) particulars, but he has not worked out alternative. Perhaps better to run the contrast with Wittgenstein would therefore be Frege: the closed sense of a complex name (e.g. a proposition) is formed from the open sense of a function sign closing onto the closed sense of a (simpler) proper name.

connected up in such a way. But where Frege lays out his variety *a priori* and uses 'object' to denote one of its classes, Wittgenstein denies the possibility of such an *a priori* exposition and uses 'object' as a catch-all word for entities of reference of all (onto)logical types.

More, Frege divides up his entities of reference into those which are saturated – the objects – and those which are unsaturated – the various types of concept. This division we can compare with the late Russell's division of entities into those which are self-standing – the particulars – and those which are essentially copulative – the universals. Wittgenstein, whilst agreeing with the late Russell in rejecting the idea that the unity of a complex is the product of something other than that complex's constituents, rejects the Russellian idea that some one particular of a complex's constituents – the universal – is responsible for its unity. Rather, Wittgenstein accords responsibility for a complex's unity to all of its constituents, as a group. No one sort of entity is, as Russellian universals, singled out as essentially copulative; rather, all things of all types are thus incomplete. Tractarian objects stand here in basic contrast with both Fregean objects and Russellian terms/particulars. What is self-standing in the *Tractatus* is not a thing, is not something to which there may be reference, but is rather a fact. The world is the totality of facts, not of things.⁴⁰

An *atomic* object (simple)
how does this come to terms with
the syntax/semantics of the
language? (clear that F.'s doctrine
comes to) but also? No single answer
between mine and Frege's!

⁴⁰ See Ramsey 1925 (especially p11 and pp.17-18) for an understanding of Wittgenstein's objects in agreement with that of this chapter. I discuss this below in the first appendix to this chapter. More recently, Linsky has written: 'All of the constituents of the proposition in the *Tractatus* are incomplete' (Linsky 1992 pp.266-267). Further examples of Tractarian objects being described, or clearly thought of, as incomplete in the way of a late Russellian universal, or of a sense of a Fregean concept word, are not, however, forthcoming. The common line, as suggested, is rather an assimilation of Tractarian objects to those of Frege (see, e.g., Ishiguro 2001 p28). Anscombe asserts it 'fairly clear' that Ramsey was mistaken (Anscombe 1959 p99).

Appendix 1 to chapter 2

Ramsey on Tractarian objects

I want to enlist the support of Ramsey in the major claims of the chapter above.

Though still an undergraduate at the time, Ramsey worked at length, in 1921-22, on the *Tractatus*' first English edition, and it was he who was commissioned in 1923 to write its review in *Mind*.⁴¹ In September 1923 Ramsey paid a visit to Wittgenstein in Puchberg where, over the course of a fortnight, Wittgenstein spent five hours a day going through the book with him line by line (CL pp.186-187). It was important to Wittgenstein that someone understand him, and Ramsey – the outstanding mathematician-philosopher of the 1920s – was best equipped for that purpose. Several more visits were made to Austria and a considerable philosophical correspondence was maintained (though there was a falling out in 1926). Indeed, throughout the 1920s, Ramsey was *the* authority on the work; that Wittgenstein himself saw Ramsey in that role is reflected in the self-assurance with which Ramsey makes such comments as:

Of all your work he [Russell] seems now to accept only this: that it is nonsense to put an adjective where a substantive ought to be which helps in his theory of types. ...

I had a *long discussion with Moore* the other day, who has *grasped more of your work than I should have expected*. (CL p197, February 1924)

More, from Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in January 1929 until his death in January 1930, Ramsey remained Wittgenstein's foremost interlocutor on his *Tractatus*. In his introduction to *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes:

For since beginning to occupy myself with philosophy again, sixteen years ago, I have been forced to recognise grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book. I was helped to realize these mistakes – to a degree which I myself am hardly able to estimate – by the criticism which my ideas

encountered from Frank Ramsey, with whom I discussed them in innumerable conversations during the last two years of his life. (PI pviii)

Ramsey's Tractarian exegetical credentials are without rival; let's look now at what he had to say. The key piece here is a 1925 paper entitled *Universals* whose stated purpose is 'to consider whether there is a fundamental division of objects into two classes, particulars and universals' (Ramsey 1925 p8). To this end, the positions of 'Mr Johnson' and 'Mr Russell' are brought into play:⁴²

According to [Mr Russell] terms are divided into individuals or particulars, qualities and relations, qualities and relations being grouped together as universals. ... Mr Johnson also divides terms into substantives and adjectives, including relations as transitive adjectives; and he regards the distinction between substantive and adjective as explaining that between particular and universal. But between these authorities, who agree so far, there is still an important difference. Mr Johnson holds that although the nature of a substantive is such that it can only function in a proposition as subject and never as predicate, yet an adjective can function either as predicate or as a subject of which a secondary adjective can be predicated. ... Mr Russell, on the other hand, in his lectures on Logical Atomism, has denied this. He says that about an adjective there is something incomplete, some suggestion of the form of a proposition; so that the adjective-symbol can never stand alone or be the subject of a proposition, but must be completed into a proposition in which it is the predicate. Thus, he says, the appropriate symbol for redness is not the word 'red' but the function 'x is red', and red can only come into a proposition through the values of this function. (Ramsey 1925 pp. 9-10)

So (what I have called) the late Russell is nicely set out alongside Johnson who follows the early and middle Russell in allowing universals as terms. Next, an objection is considered to Johnson:

⁴¹ Ramsey (1923).

⁴² I shall quote Ramsey at length; it is necessary for this appendix to have any value to convince that I do not misinterpret him.

For instance, Mr Russell urges that a relation between two terms cannot be a third term which comes between them, for then it would not be a relation at all, and the only genuinely relational element would consist in the connections between this term and the two original terms. This is the kind of consideration from which Mr Bradley deduced his infinite regress, of which Mr Russell apparently now approves. Mr Johnson might reply that for him the connective or structural element is not the relation but the characterising and coupling ties; but these ties remain most mysterious objects. (Ramsey 1925 p11)

If Johnson's (the early Russell's) relation is a term, then it is not 'genuinely relational' and so cannot be responsible for a unity beyond itself. The response that the genuinely relational element (i.e. the unifying element) is not the relation but the coupling ties (the logical form; the idea of the middle Russell) is mysterious. To (the late) Russell's position, however, Ramsey considers the response:

Against Mr Russell it might be asked how there can be such objects as his universals, which contain the form of a proposition and so are incomplete. In a sense, it might be urged, all objects are incomplete; they cannot occur in facts except in conjunction with other objects, and they contain the forms of propositions of which they are constituents. In what way do universals do this more than anything else? (Ramsey 1925 p11)

After looking into the matter in some more depth, Ramsey asserts that:

[W]hat we have primarily to examine is the construction of the atomic fact out of its constituents. About this three views might be suggested; first there is that of Mr Johnson according to whom the constituents are connected together by what he calls the characterising tie. The nature of this entity is rather obscure, but I think we can take it as something which is not a constituent of the fact but represented in language by the copula 'is', and we can describe this theory as holding that the connection is made by a real copula. Next there is the theory of Mr Russell that the connection is made by

one of the constituents; that in every atomic fact there must be one constituent which is in its own nature incomplete or connective and, as it were, holds the other constituents together. This constituent will be a universal, and the others particulars. Lastly there is Mr Wittgenstein's theory that neither is there a copula, nor one specially connected constituent, but that, as he expresses it, the objects hang one in another like the links of a chain. (Ramsey 1925 p17)

And against Russell Ramsey repeats his early criticism, this time explicitly calling support from Wittgenstein:

The great difficulty with this [Russell's] theory lies in understanding how one sort of object can be specially incomplete. There is a sense in which any object is incomplete; namely that it can only occur in a fact by connection with an object or objects of a suitable type; just as any name is incomplete because to form a proposition we have to join to it certain other names of suitable type. As Wittgenstein says: "The thing is independent, in so far as it can occur in all *possible* circumstances, but this form of independence is a form of connection with the atomic fact, a form of dependence". (Ramsey 1925 pp.17-18)

More than maintaining his preferred view that there is no asymmetry between different types of objects as regards their completeness, that all objects are in an important sense incomplete, however, Ramsey is keen further to assert that an unbiased mathematician will not be concerned to make any distinction whatsoever between different types of things, and in particular that 'nothing can be meant by calling one type the type of individuals and the other that of qualities' (Ramsey 1925 p28). Against this stronger view, it is taken that Russell would press that 'all atomic propositions are of the forms $R_1(x)$, $R_2(x,y)$, $R_3(x,y,z)$, etc., and so [the mathematical logician] can *define* individuals as terms which can occur in propositions with any number of terms; whereas of course an n-termed relation could only occur in a proposition with n+1 terms' (Ramsey 1925 p29). To which Ramsey responds:

But this assumes his [Russell's] theory as to the constitution of atomic facts, that each must contain a term of a special kind, called a universal; a theory

we found to be utterly groundless. The truth is that we know and can know nothing whatever about the forms of atomic propositions; we do not know whether some or all objects can occur in more than one form of atomic proposition; and there is obviously no way of deciding any such question. We cannot even tell that there are not atomic facts consisting of two terms of the same type. (Ramsey 1925 p29)

The failure to see this, Ramsey finally suggests, is in fact the root cause of 'the great muddle' which is the theory of universals:

Of all philosophers Wittgenstein alone has seen through this muddle and declared that about the forms of atomic propositions we can know nothing whatever. (Ramsey 1925 p30)

In his enthusiasm here Ramsey here overstates the case: Wittgenstein asserted only that we can know nothing *a priori* about the forms of atomic propositions; the unbiased mathematician (mathematical logician) will not be concerned to make any *a priori* distinction between different types of things. In a subsequent note on the paper, however, Ramsey retreats to what is the true Tractarian position, the statement of which may serve as a conclusion to the appendix:

When I wrote my article I was sure that it was impossible to discover atomic propositions by actual analysis. Of this I am now very doubtful, and I cannot therefore be sure that they may not be discovered to be all of one or other of a series of forms which can be expressed by $R_1(x)$, $R_2(x,y)$, $R_3(x,y,z)$, etc., in which case we could, as Mr Russell has suggested, define universals as terms which can occur in propositions of any of these forms, universals as terms which can only occur in one form. This I admit may be found to be the case, but as no one can as yet be certain what sort of atomic propositions there are, it cannot be positively asserted; and there are no strong presumptions in its favour, for I think that the argument of my article establishes that nothing of the sort can be known *a priori*.

And this is a matter of some importance, for philosophers such as Mr Russell have thought that, although they did not know into what ultimate

terms propositions are analysable, these terms must nevertheless be divisible into universals and particulars, categories which are used in philosophical investigations as if it were certain *a priori* that they would be applicable.
(Ramsey 1990 p31)

Appendix 2 to chapter 2

Tractatus 1.1

We have arrived through the work above at an understanding of Tractatus 1.1 which is, I take it, non-standard. It may be useful to inspect and make contrast with what has been, historically, the most common interpretation of that section. I shall suggest first that that interpretation is intrinsically implausible as an interpretation of Tractatus 1.1; second that it is something Wittgenstein himself rejected as an interpretation of Tractatus 1.1; and third that it is mistaken of the Tractatus as a whole – indeed that its proposal betrays a failure to understand that aspect of the Tractarian metaphysics which Wittgenstein is in fact presenting in Tractatus 1.1.

In his introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus, Russell writes:

The world is not described by merely naming all the objects in it; it is necessary also to know the atomic facts of which these objects are constituents. (TLP pxiv)

This thought is expounded by Sullivan:

Suppose, then, that we take Russell's observation as given: a catalogue of facts, and not merely of things, is needed to distinguish this world from any other, or how things are from how they might have been; in whatever sense that implies, facts belong to the world. (Sullivan 2005 p47)

and has naturally (and I think correctly), been taken as a comment on section 1.1 of Wittgenstein's text. Certainly, Russell's remark has been followed as such. In detailing the world, it is often agreed Wittgenstein asserts in section 1.1, one cannot merely list the things therein – it is required also to say how those things stand there with each other. For if we do not talk also of how things stand, of facts, we shall not be able to distinguish this world from a distinct world in which (the same) things stand differently:

At the start we are told that the world is all that is the case: a totality of facts, not merely a totality of things (1 and 1.1). The world cannot be identified with a totality of things, since the totality of things can constitute a variety of possible worlds depending upon their arrangement. (Fogelin 1987 p3)

We might imagine a world consisting of objects *a* and *b* and a relation *R*. If our aim is to describe accurately this world, it is not enough simply to offer a list of these constituents – this list would not distinguish a universe in which *aRb* is the case from one in which *bRa* is the case. Instead, our description must incorporate within it some acknowledgement of structure; it must see the world as composed of facts, not things. (Ostrow 2002 p23)

But we can and should, I think, be immediately suspicious of such interpretations. For central to their offering is a use of the word ‘merely’, ‘just’, ‘simply’ etc.: In giving the world one must catalogue not *just* the things therein *but also* the facts there constituted by those things.⁴³ Wittgenstein, however, did not write at *Tractatus* 1.1 that the world is the totality not merely of things but also of facts, that the world is composed variously of things and also of facts constituted by those things: he wrote that the world is the totality of facts, and not of things – *not of things at all*.

More, there is textual evidence to suggest that Wittgenstein himself rejected such an interpretation of the *Tractatus*’ opening passage. In conversation with Desmond Lee during the year 1930-1931, Wittgenstein is recorded as saying of his earlier work:

1. “The world is everything that is the case”. This is intended to recall and correct the statement “The world is everything that there is”; the world does not consist of a catalogue of things and facts about them (like the catalogue of a show). (LWL p119)

⁴³ See also Kenny 1973 p74: ‘The world will be, as the *Tractatus* says, the totality of facts, not things (it is the position, not just the board plus the pieces)’. Sullivan, too, suggests that Russell’s idea that: ‘a catalogue merely of things ... is not enough to fill one centrally important role that philosophy has assigned to the notion of world: the role of what thought answers to, or what thoughts are measured against to be assessed as true or false’ (Sullivan 2005 p45) is at least a part of what Wittgenstein intended in *Tractatus* 1.1.

The world does not consist of a catalogue simply of things. Nor indeed, Wittgenstein retrospectively adds, does it consist of a catalogue of things and also of facts about them (facts of which they are a constituent⁴⁴). This addition seems very likely to have been provoked by and directed at Russell's comment in the introduction to his book.

More than voicing suspicions of the Russellian rendering of Tractatus 1.1 *as* a rendering of Tractatus 1.1, however, we are in a position to find it misguided as a comment on the Tractatus more generally – indeed to suggest that its proposal betrays a failure to understand just that aspect of the Tractarian metaphysics which Wittgenstein is in fact presenting in Tractatus 1.1. For what is seen by its advocates is a world constituted both of simples (the objects) and also of complexes composed of those simples (the facts): and Wittgenstein as being keen to point out that the complexes must be included too.^{45, 46} So to envision the world, however, is to fail to notice that what is simple in the Tractatus – an object – is not, as what is complex, any kind of self-standing unit.

We do not come across equally in the world both simples and complexes; rather, what we come across in the first instance are only complexes, simples being found only subsequently by (as it were) 'looking inside' the complexes.⁴⁷ To think of the world as composed variously of both objects and facts is, I take it, to be involved in a failure to recognise this contrast and subordination. Properly taking on board what Wittgenstein in fact intends by Tractatus 1.1 should, I suggest, leave no inclination whatsoever to say: the world is not the totality merely of things.

⁴⁴ The material (external, contingent) properties of an object are precisely the configurations that object enters into with other objects (see 2.0231).

⁴⁵ This may be the picture even in recognition that what is simple and what is complex differ in kind, that complexes (facts) are not complex *objects*, are not complex entities of reference (3.144, 3.24). Russell was by 1918 enough under Wittgenstein's spell to deny that what is complex – a fact – is an *entity* in the same sense as its simple constituents, but this was not felt as a bar to saying in the same breath that what 'you come across in the world' are both simple things and complex facts composed of those simple things (PLA p270, see also pp. 191-192).

⁴⁶ Note how easy it must have been, given his own 'universe' of simples and complexes (see, e.g., PM p44 (above) or RA p134), for Russell to misunderstand Wittgenstein in this way.

⁴⁷ Of course, simples do have a certain 'independent reality': they subsist independently of what is the case (2.024) and may be identified as the same across two different complexes (2.0122). Their availability for reference is not contingent upon the occurrence of an atomic fact of which they are a constituent. But this subsistence is no kind of being *in* the world, is no kind of *actuality* (it is no kind

Appendix 3 to chapter 2

Complex and fact

It was asserted at the beginning of the second half of the main text of this chapter that Wittgenstein inherited from Russell the idea of atomic facts that they are complexes of objects. Certain authors might, however, question Wittgenstein's adoption of this Russellian thesis: it has been denied that atomic facts (*Sachverhalten*) are what the *Tractatus* talks of as complexes (*Komplexen*). In this appendix I want to press that we should indeed make the identification.

Before I begin, however, it is important to see that either way, the matter does not threaten to undermine significantly the work given above. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein says of an atomic fact that it is a *combination* (*eine Verbindung*) of objects, that it is *composed* (*zusammengesetzt*) of objects (4.2211), and that it has objects as its *constituents* (*Bestandteile*) (2.011). I expressed this Tractarian thesis by calling an atomic fact a complex of objects. Whether or not that appellation goes against Wittgenstein's own use of *Komplex* in the *Tractatus* should not be felt to be of great weight for what was said *about* the Tractarian thesis. Nonetheless, the issue is of definite interest: if (what Wittgenstein does explicitly call) complexes are indeed facts then we should like to see how what is there said of them fits with the ideas we have developed; if they are *not* facts then we should like very much to understand how they are to fit alongside objects and facts in the Tractarian metaphysics.

2a3.1

Section 2.01 of the *Tractatus* writes of an atomic fact not that it is a complex of objects, but that it is a combination (*eine Verbindung*) of objects. Certain commentators have found this significant. Hacker, for instance, writes that Wittgenstein was 'careful in the *Tractatus* to distinguish fact from complex, and said that a fact consists of, or is constituted of, objects' (Hacker 2000 p388). For Pears, Wittgenstein's talk of complexes is taken unhesitatingly to be talk not of facts but of complex *objects* (see, e.g., Pears 1987 p77). I, by contrast, shall

of being in the realm of the actual), and that that is so – the *dependent* nature of objects – is what is ridden roughshod over by the standard interpretation of *Tractatus* 1.1.

side with Russell's understanding of Wittgenstein's intentions on this matter (though I would hesitate to express the matter quite as he does):

What is complex in the world is a fact. (TLP pxi)

Pears and Hacker are not, of course, without motivation, but before turning there, let's adduce certain evidences in our favour. First, we can inspect the introduction of the idea of a complex in the Tractatus:

Objects are simple.

Every statement about complexes can be resolved into a statement about their constituents and into the propositions that describe the complexes completely.

Objects make up the substance of the world. That is why they cannot be composite. (TLP 2.02-2.021)

Objects and complexes stand in contrast with each other: Where objects are simple (and what room is left by this for Pears' idea of a 'complex object?'), are non-composite (*nicht zusammengesetzt*), complexes are complex, are composite. A complex, unlike an object, has constituents (*Bestandteile*). But what are these constituents of a complex? Surely, one must suppose, they will be the (constitutively simple) objects. Confirming this is a parenthesised remark of TLP 4.441:

It is clear that a complex of the signs 'F' and 'T' has no object (or complex of objects) corresponding to it ... (4.441)

Tractarian complexes are complexes of Tractarian objects. The composite complexes are composed of the non-composite objects. What then about the relationship between facts and objects?:

An atomic fact is a combination of objects (entities, things).

It is essential to a thing that it can be a constituent [*Bestandteile*] of an atomic fact. (2.01-2.011)

Even ... if ... every atomic fact is composed [*zusammengesetzt*] of infinitely many objects ... (4.2211)

In precisely the same language as complexes, atomic facts are composed of objects, they have objects as their constituents. Strong evidence, one might think, that Wittgenstein does not mean us to find a distinction between a combination of objects (an atomic fact) and a complex of objects (a complex). Next, we can consider together:

Objects can only be *named*. (3.221)

A complex can be given only by its description, which will be right or wrong. (3.24)

A proposition is a description of a fact. (4.023)

Situations can be described but not *named*. (3.144)

A complex has a description which is a proposition (which is something which can be right or wrong, true or false), and what a proposition describes is a fact. Denying that a complex is a fact would require either finding two separate senses of ‘description’ in play at these points in the *Tractatus*, or suggesting that a proposition can at once be a description in the same sense of two different ‘things’. But where in the text are we to find the motivation for either of those? Further:

To perceive a complex means to perceive that its constituents are related to one another in such and such a way.

This no doubt also explains why there are two possible ways of seeing the figure

[– {12 line depiction of a cube with four corners marked ‘a’, four marked ‘b’} –]

as a cube; and all similar phenomena. For we really see two different facts. (5.5423)

To perceive a complex is to perceive that something is the case. The Tractarian Wittgenstein finds no difference of (grammatical) type between perceiving or seeing a complex and perceiving or seeing that something is the case. To see a complex is, Wittgenstein asserts, to see a fact. Now it may not follow rigidly from this that a complex is a fact, but we would

again want to know what the alternative story might be and where we are to find it motivated by the text.

Externally, we may adduce in addition the failure of the later Wittgenstein to remember ever having been involved in a distinction between fact and complex:

Talking of a fact as a “complex of objects” springs from this confusion (cf. *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*). (BB p31)

This is the root of my erroneous expression: a fact is a complex of objects. To say: a red circle ‘consists of’ redness and circularity, is a complex of these constituents is a misuse of these words, and misleading. (PPI 108)

Indeed, there is an entire two and a half page appendix to *Philosophical Remarks* (repeated in *Philosophical Grammar*) entitled ‘Complex and Fact’ and devoted entirely to contrasting the two (PR pp. 301-303, PG pp. 199-201). Wittgenstein was not a man who was casually forgetful in later life about the central ideas of his earlier work.⁴⁸

Finally, and most generally, we should feel that there is simply no room in the *Tractatus* for a third type beyond object and fact. There is in the *Tractatus* the subsistence of objects and the existence of facts – what third manner of being is to be countenanced for complexes which are not facts? In sum, I take the evidence to be extremely strong that Wittgenstein did not intend us to find a (categorical) distinction in the *Tractatus* between complex and fact.

2a3.2

Why, though, might someone think that he did? Well let’s look at the key passages of the *Tractatus* for Wittgenstein’s talk of complexes:

Every statement about complexes can be resolved into a statement about their constituents and into the propositions that describe the complexes completely. (2.0201)

⁴⁸ Kenny, astonishingly, disagrees: Wittgenstein ‘came to misrepresent the *Tractatus* on the nature of names, on the nature of objects, on the nature of facts, and on the nature of propositions’ (Kenny 1974 p4). In particular he finds the passage ‘Complex and Fact’ in the *Philosophical Remarks* ‘surprising in various ways’, for it ‘suggests that Wittgenstein once held the view that a fact was a complex of objects’ (Kenny 1974 p9) – something which Kenny finds clearly untrue.

A proposition about a complex stands in an internal relation to a proposition about a constituent of the complex.

A complex can be given only by its description, which will be right or wrong. A proposition that mentions a complex will not be nonsensical, if the complex does not exist, but simply false.

When a propositional element signifies [*bezeichnen*] a complex, this can be seen from an indeterminateness in the propositions in which it occurs. In such cases we *know* that the proposition leaves something undetermined. (In fact the notation for generality *contains* a prototype.)

The contraction of the symbols of a complex into a simple symbol can be expressed in a definition. (3.24)

Nor does analysis resolve the sign for a complex in an arbitrary way, so that it would have a different resolution every time that it was incorporated in a different proposition. (3.3442)

Just as statements can *be about* the constituents of complexes (about objects), they can also, it would seem, *be about* complexes. Propositional elements can *signify* complexes just, it would seem, as they can *signify* (simple) objects. ('Our use of the same sign to signify [*bezeichnen*] two different objects ...' (3.322), 'Can we understand two names without knowing whether they signify the same thing or two different things?' (4.243).) But the signifying relation between a propositional element which signifies an object – a name – and that which it signifies is, precisely, *reference*. Is the implication not, then, that propositional elements (sub-propositional symbols) can sometimes refer to complexes? Is Wittgenstein not saying in these passages that when a proposition has an element which refers to a complex (or at least: connects with a complex in a manner akin in some way to reference), then the proposition is to be analysed in a certain way? And is he not thus implying that a complex is some kind of object? Well it may be obvious to the non-casual reader that he's not (not on either score), but what is more obvious still is that a proper, alternative understanding of these sections is necessary if we are to remain confident with the idea that complexes are (nothing but) facts.

Such an understanding of these passages will, I suggest, be greatly facilitated by the inspection of their history. In 1911 when Wittgenstein first arrived on the scene Russell held the picture of object, simple, complex and fact that objects – what may be referred to in sentences – may be either simple or complex, and that facts and complex objects are to be identified. Over the course of the following few years, Wittgenstein broke with this Russellian conception, but the break was not an easy one.

2a3.3

It is notable that whilst in the *Tractatus* *Komplex* features always as a noun, *einfach* always as an adjective but never as a modifier of *Gegenstand*, and *Gegenstand* always signifies what is simple, there is considerably more diversity in the Notebooks. There, *komplex* and *einfach* are both used liberally as adjectival modifiers of *Gegenstand* –often in proximity and opposition to each other –, and both *Komplex* and *Einfach* appear as nouns synonymous with *komplex Gegenstand* and *einfach Gegenstand* (see, e.g., NB p60). Indeed at one point we find:

A complex just is a thing! [Ein Komplex ist eben ein Ding!] (NB p49)

We may conclude, then, that at a certain stage in the development of the ideas, Wittgenstein found what in the *Tractatus* became *object* (– the *Einfach* or *einfach Gegenstand* of the Notebooks) and what there became *complex* (– the *Komplex* or *komplex Gegenstand* of the Notebooks) to work together as being, in some sense, different kinds of *things*, different kinds of objects. Which is not to say, of course, that such an assimilation was ever considered unproblematic. Only ten days after the declaration that a complex is a thing Wittgenstein writes:

The mistake in this conception must lie in its, on the one hand, contrasting complexes and simple objects, while on the other hand it treats them as akin. And yet: *Components* [*Bestandteile*] and *complex* seem to be akin, *and* to be opposed to one another. (NB p53)

But what is at issue? How are the two akin, and how are they opposed?

Wittgenstein is involved here in a struggle in which a number of forces exert pressure. First of these is his inclination to tie together the three concepts: *name*, *refer*, and *object (thing)*. A name may refer to an object; an object may be referred to by a name; what are referred to are objects; what refer are names. Second is a desire to see reference as a certain kind of 'standing for' relation to a meaning: in a proposition a name stands for the object which is its meaning. And third is a certain reasoning to the conclusion that the role in propositions of what Wittgenstein inclines to call symbols for complexes (what Russell would call a name of a complex) cannot be one of 'standing for' an entity which is the meaning. This reasoning is quite simple: If a symbol for a complex had that complex as its meaning, then the non-existence of the complex would entail meaninglessness for the symbol, and so also for all sentences containing that symbol. Sentences containing symbols for complexes do not, however, depend for their meaningfulness on the existence of those complexes. ("Excalibur has a sharp blade" makes *sense* whether Excalibur is still whole or broken up' (PI 39). See also TLP 2.021-2.0212; it's not my concern here to investigate in any detail this (important) element of Wittgenstein's early thinking.)

Combining these three forces would seem to require that whilst symbols for simples may be names referring to those simples, which are objects, symbols for complexes are not names – complexes are not objects. But Wittgenstein is uneasy with this conclusion:

Can we regard a part of space as a thing? In a certain sense we obviously always do this when we talk of spatial things.

For it seems – at least so far as I can see at present – that the matter is not settled by getting rid of names by means of definitions: complex spatial objects, for example, seem to me in some sense to be essentially things – I as it were see them as things. – And the designation of them by means of names seems to be more than a mere trick of language. Spatial complex objects – for example – really, so it seems, do appear as things.

But what does all that signify?

At any rate that we quite instinctively designate those objects by means of names. (NB pp. 47-48)

What is the source of the feeling “I can correlate a name with all that I see, with this landscape, with the dance of motes in the air, with all this; indeed, what should we call a name if not this”?! (NB p53)

That the ‘names’ of complexes, unlike the names of simple objects, are to be got ‘rid of by means of definitions’ (see below) does not seem to settle the matter against considering complexes to be things/objects. Surely the appearance that in language there is designation of complexes by means of names must surely ‘be more than a trick’, more than an illusion – for the whole idea of standing for, of reference, of correlating names with things, of designating things with names, seems to take rise from – even to be paradigmatically exemplified in – the ‘naming’ of ‘things’ that are not simple. ‘What should we call a name if not this’? To our three ‘forces’, then, we may add a fourth to the effect that complexes are things to which we may refer. Something, it would seem, has got to give.

Throughout his discussions, Wittgenstein holds steadfastly to the idea that symbols for simples stand for their simples, to the argument that symbols for complexes cannot stand, in the same way, for their complexes, and also to the conceptual linking between ‘object’, ‘reference’ and ‘name’. So taking these as given, we could present the situation as a dilemma: either we are liberal and allow ‘reference’ to cover both the relation between symbols for simples and their simples and also that between (sub-propositional) symbols for complexes and their complexes (we allow complexes to be objects too), thus relaxing the second ‘force’ above, or we are illiberal and insist that symbols for complexes do not refer to their complexes (insist that complexes are not objects) thereby denying the fourth:

The name of a complex functions in the proposition like the name of an object that I only know by *description*. – The proposition that depicts it functions as a description.

But if there are simple objects, is it correct to call both the signs for them and those other signs “names”?

Or is “name” so to speak a *logical* concept? (NB p52)

By the writing of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein has answered this last question affirmatively. The idea of an object (a thing) does not extend to include complexes. Complexes are not, properly speaking, referred to in propositions – they are not, properly (logically) speaking,

complex *objects*. So to think of them would be deeply misguided and so to speak of them would be deeply misleading. Thus the complex objects of the Notebooks become complexes, and the simple objects become objects. Names of complex objects become symbols for complexes. “Name” and “object” *are*, in the Tractatus, logical concepts, and what we might normally think of in everyday life as names and objects are not actually so (logically speaking).⁴⁹

2a3.4

How then do symbols for complexes function in propositions, if not as names (if not as elements standing for a worldly entity)? What, indeed, is a ‘symbol for a complex’ then supposed to be? We should look again at the first mention of complexes in the Tractatus:

Every statement about complexes can be resolved into a statement about their constituents and into the propositions that describe the complexes completely. (2.0201)

Helping us out with this is an early remark from the Notebooks:

$\varphi(a).\varphi(b).aRb = \text{Def } \varphi[aRb]$ (NB p4)

and also the following passage from the Investigations:

When I say: “My broom is in the corner”, – is this really a statement about the broomstick and the brush? Well, it could at any rate be replaced by a statement giving the position of the stick and the position of the brush. And this statement is surely a further analysed form of the first one. – But why do I call it “further analysed”? – Well, if the broom is there, that surely means that the stick and brush must be there, and in a particular relation to one another; and this was as it were hidden in the sense of the first sentence, and is *expressed* in the analysed sentence. Then does someone who says that the

⁴⁹ We may compare Wittgenstein’s use of ‘logical’ in his question ‘Is “name” so to speak a *logical* concept?’ (NB p47 above) (and what I mean by ‘properly (logically) speaking’ here), with Frege’s description in *On Concept and Object* of his use of ‘concept’ in *The Foundations of Arithmetic* as being ‘purely logical’ CO p181)

broom is in the corner really mean: the broomstick is there, and so is the brush, and the broomstick is fixed to the brush? (PI 60)

So (as an illustration): ‘The broom is in the corner’ contains a symbol for a complex – ‘the broom’ – and is to be analysed/resolved into ‘The brush is in the corner, the stick is in the corner, and the brush is fixed to the stick’ – these first two conjuncts being propositions about the complex’s constituents, and the third, being a ‘complete description of the complex’. First, then we need to remark the idea, crossed above, of a ‘description of a complex’. ‘The brush is fixed to the stick’ describes the broom. More, every complex has a unique description by which it is given:

A complex can be given only by its description, which will be right or wrong. (3.24)

Now a right or wrong description is, of course, a proposition, and so to give a complex is to say (something about) how things are. And things may or may not be that way – the complex may or may not *exist*:

... the proposition which describes the complex perfectly; i.e. that proposition which is equivalent to saying the complex exists. (NB p99)

Complexes are given by propositions – their descriptions – which assert something about the world; a description of a complex is, in effect, the assertion of the complex’s existence. The broom is described by the proposition: ‘The brush is fixed to the stick’, which is what ‘The broom exists’ is analysed to on removing the symbol for the complex. (See here Russell’s introduction: ‘The assertion that there is a certain complex reduces to the assertion that its constituents are related in a certain way’ (TLP pxiii).)⁵⁰

⁵⁰ It’s worth briefly remarking the oddity of Wittgenstein’s use of ‘description’ here: to describe a complex is not to say something about the complex (how it looks, what it tastes of etc.), but rather to say something about the complex’s elements: that they are combined in a certain way. This unnatural use is something Wittgenstein comes later on to recognise:

‘To describe a fact’, or ‘the description of a fact’, is also a misleading expression for the assertion stating that the fact obtains, since it sounds like: ‘describing the animal I saw’. (PR p302)

Returning with this in hand to the assertion of 2.0201 that a proposition which mentions complexes ‘can be resolved into a statement about their constituents and into the propositions that describe the complexes completely’ (2.0201), we should ask: how are these various propositions connected, truth functionally, in the resolution (analysis) of our original proposition? From the following we can deduce, in line with the examples above from the Notebooks and the Investigations, that they are *conjoined*:

A proposition which mentions a complex will not be nonsensical, if the complex does not exist, but simply false. (3.24)

If the complex does not exist then its description is false, and in order for the falsity of the description to entail the falsity of a truth function of it, that truth function must be a conjunction.⁵¹ Thus we have the idea that if ‘p’ is a proposition mentioning, say, two complexes c and d, then ‘p’ is to be analysed to ‘q&r&s’ where ‘r’ asserts the existence of c (is a description of c), ‘s’ asserts the existence of d (is a description of d), and ‘q’ is a proposition mentioning neither c nor d but rather their components.⁵² How to understand this conditional is now the crux of the matter. For what we absolutely can *not* have is this: when ‘p’ contains a name for a complex whose description is ‘d’ then ‘p’ is to be analysed to ‘d&q’.

What we need still, crucially, is an idea of what it is for a (sub-propositional) symbol to signify a complex. Of course, one could read the matter as: what it is to signify a complex is to have an analysis of the specified sort (we could run with something like: ‘s’ signifies a complex =_{df} if ‘p’ contains ‘s’ then ‘p’ is to be analysed to ‘d&q’ where ‘d’ is elementary and

⁵¹ It might be suggested that this is not so, that there are four truth functions of two propositions ‘p’ and ‘q’ such that the falsity of ‘p’ entails the falsity of the truth function, namely ‘p&q’, ‘p&~q’, ‘p’ and contradiction. Note, however, that the last of these is truth functionally equivalent to ‘p&~p’ and the third to ‘p&p’, and that the second is already a conjunction.

⁵² There may seem to be the following counterexamples to 3.24: ‘ $\phi[aRb] \vee (\sim aRb)$ ’ (‘If the broom exists then it is in the corner’) and ‘ $\sim \phi[aRb]$ ’ (‘It is not the case that the broom is in the corner’) – these ‘mention the complex’ but are true if the complex does not exist. The obvious response here is to say that by ‘proposition mentioning a complex’ we mean to exclude propositions which, before resolving the symbol for the complex, we can already see as a truth function of other, truth functionally simpler propositions. (With negation, we may find a further proposition ‘The broom is not in the corner’ which we may want to write instead as ‘ $(\sim \phi)[aRb]$ ’. This, I take it, does mention the complex and will not, without resolving the sign for the complex, be visible as a truth function of anything simpler; it will resolve to ‘ $aRb. \sim (\phi a. \phi b)$ ’ (‘The broom is attached to the stick but they are not both in the corner’), or perhaps to ‘ $aRb. \sim \phi a. \sim \phi b$ ’ (‘The broom is attached to the stick and neither is in the corner’). (Indeed it may prove on further analysis that these two ‘options’ are in fact the same).)

is the analysis of 's exists' and 'q' does not contain 's' but does contain symbols featuring in 'd'). But on such a reading it would be a mystery why Wittgenstein would even talk about 'symbols for complexes'. Analysis is to proceed in a variety of unforeseen ways, why choose to characterise one possible such way, singling it out for special mention? And why give it a title which connects it to the idea of a complex (of an atomic fact)? This cannot, surely, be happy. Wittgenstein appears, at least, to be making a claim of some substance when he says that 'every statement about complexes can be resolved into a statement about their constituents and into the propositions that describe the complexes completely' (2.0201); he does not appear to be giving a backhanded definition of 'statement about a complex'.

Where to turn then for an independent specification of what it is to signify a complex/atomic fact? Well how about putting:

The simplest kind of proposition, an elementary proposition, asserts the existence of an atomic fact. (4.21)

together with the observation above of Russell's:

The assertion that there is a certain complex reduces to the assertion that its constituents are related in a certain way. (TLP pxiv)

The assertion that a certain complex exists reduces to an elementary proposition, and an elementary proposition asserts the existence of a complex. For with this we can offer: A symbol 's' in a certain proposition is a symbol for a complex just in case there is a proposition 's exists' containing the same symbol whose analysis is an elementary proposition. This, I suggest, is how we should understand what it is to be a 'propositional element signifying a complex', and with such in hand we may find a substantial reading of the conditional drawn above.

We can, in this way, identify (sub-propositional) symbols for complexes in such a way that the passages in which Wittgenstein discusses how propositions containing them are to be analysed can be given a substantial reading which does not involve symbols for complexes having meaning in a manner inconsistent with the identification of complexes with facts.

(Certain avenues now open: why did Wittgenstein decree in this way how propositions containing certain types of symbols are to be analysed? Did he merely take it as obvious that a proposition which mentions, in the sense suggested, a non-existent complex (and which cannot, before resolving the symbol for the complex, already be seen as a truth function of other, truth functionally simpler propositions) cannot be true and so, as it must for deep reasons be truthvalued, must therefore be false? What is the (clearly important) connection here with Russell's theory of descriptions? This thesis, however, is aimed at the atomic rather than the molecular of the Tractatus; they shall not be investigated.)

2a3.5

In conclusion, then, of this third appendix to chapter 2: There is extremely strong evidence available that Wittgenstein did intend an identification of complex with atomic fact. Objects are simple and what they compose are atomic facts. That is my understanding of the basic Tractarian picture, and that understanding is not, I suggest, undermined by Wittgenstein's talk of complexes being signified by sub-propositional symbols.

Chapter 3

Symbols

In the last chapter we investigated Wittgenstein's Tractarian metaphysics; in this we shall look at the philosophy of language. Attention will be focused here on the theory of atomic thought, and in that context on the idea for Wittgenstein of a symbol.

3.1

Something of great importance in the Tractatus is the distinction of symbol from sign. This is set out in the passage headed by section 3.32:

A sign is what can be perceived of a symbol. (3.32)

A sign is the perceptible aspect of a symbol. A sign, the contention will be, is a mark which may be made on a piece of paper, or a sound. As Wittgenstein was later to write:

The sign is the written scratch or the noise. (LWL p26)

These sounds and marks recur – ‘A’ is the same sign as ‘A’ (3.203) – and their perceptibility means something like this: that someone may be trained to notice their recurrence in the absence of any knowledge of their role in a language (of any knowledge that they have anything to do with representation). A sign is a perceptible type.

Wittgenstein does not spend any time dwelling on signs – it is symbols he is concerned to discuss – and so what we say here of signs will of necessity be a little dogmatic, but in addition to the suggestion of their ‘purely perceptual’ recognisability, I would suggest that accepting the sign ‘rat’ as nothing more than a mark-type means accepting that it occurs in occurrences of the sign ‘Socrates’. Or at least, I would suggest this: that one could (look to) deflect the idea that the sign ‘rat’ occurs in occurrences of ‘Socrates’ only by proposing that the sign ‘rat’ includes space on either side of it, that the sign of the symbol ‘rat’ is not ‘rat’ but ‘ rat ’.

Two more things: I am restricting talk at this point to simple signs – to, roughly, single words rather than more complex sign constructions such as sentential signs (we can worry about those later). And further I take it that we may consider a symbol to have just one sign. We can find occurrences of the marks ‘Green’, ‘green’, ‘GREEN’ and occurrences of the sound *green* all to be occurrences of the same sign – the perceptible aspect of the English symbol ‘green’. Signs may, in this way, be ‘disjunctive’ types; training someone to recognise their occurrences may necessarily require the use of more than one instance. As admitted, this is rather dogmatic. We can get more confident about what Wittgenstein intends us to take as a sign, however, through understanding more clearly how he intends sign to relate to symbol.

3.2

By contrast with the perceptible sign, it might be expected that ‘symbol’ will mean ‘meaningful sign’ – that a symbol will be a sign considered together with a meaning, and that occurrences of a symbol will consist in those occurrences of its sign which bear a particular meaning. But this is not the case:

In the proposition, ‘Green is green’ – where the first word is the proper name of a person and the last an adjective – these words do not merely have different meanings: they are *different symbols*. (3.323)

Difference of symbol, it is implied, is strictly stronger than difference of meaning: one and the same symbol may have different meanings on different occasions. If difference of meaning entailed difference of symbol, then there would no sense in saying: ‘these words do not *merely* have different meanings: they are different symbols’ (my emphasis).⁵³

What a symbol *does* involve as a matter of its identity, however, is a ‘mode of signification’:

So one and the same sign (written or spoken, etc.) can be common to two different symbols – in which case they will signify in different ways [– sie bezeichnen dann auf verschiedene Art und Weise]. (3.321)

⁵³ It has been suggested that there might be the alternative sense: Wittgenstein holds that difference of meaning entails difference of symbol and is instructing someone (an interlocutor) who is envisaged as not realising this. (Cf. To a struggling maths student: ‘These sets do not *merely* have different members: they are different sets.’) That this is Wittgenstein’s intention I find highly implausible; there

In everyday language it very frequently happens that the same word has different modes of signification [verschiedene Bezeichnungsweisen] – and so belongs to different symbols. (3.322)

Difference of symbol (with sameness of sign) implies difference of mode of signification, and difference of mode of signification implies difference of symbol.

These moves are crucial; before investigating what is intended by ‘mode of signification’ it is worth getting as clear about them as possible: If we have two occurrences of symbols, let SY be the proposition that they are occurrences of the same symbol, SI be the proposition that those two occurrences involve the same sign, MO be the proposition that the two signs occurring there have the same mode of signification, and ME the proposition that the two signs have there the same meaning. Then we have:

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|
| (1) | SY implies SI | (A symbol has just one sign, assumed above) |
| (2) | (SI & (~MO) implies (~SY) | (3.322, above) |
| (3) | (SI & (~SY)) implies (~MO) | (3.321, above) |
| (4) | ~[(SI & (~ME)) implies (~SY)] | (3.323, above) |

Rearranging (2) we obtain:

SY implies ~(SI & (~MO))

SY implies (~SI ∨ MO)

(SY & SI) implies MO

Adding (1) to which gives us:

SY implies (SI & MO)

Next, we may work (3) as:

is no hint here of a misunderstanding interlocutor. The Tractatus is not didactic in this way; it is no kind of textbook (TLP preface).

$(SI \ \& \ (\sim SY)) \text{ implies } (\sim MO)$

$MO \text{ implies } \sim(SI \ \& \ (\sim SY))$

$MO \text{ implies } ((\sim SI) \vee SY)$

$(MO \ \& \ SI) \text{ implies } SY$

Thus we have, so far:

$SY \text{ if, and only if } (SI \ \& \ MO)$

With meaning, by contrast, we can weaken (4) to:

$\sim[(\sim ME) \text{ implies } (\sim SY)]$

$\sim(SY \text{ implies } ME)$

More, as different signs may have the same meaning (synonyms, or signs from different languages), as, that is, $\sim(ME \text{ implies } SI)$, it follows (from (1)):

$\sim(ME \text{ implies } SY)$

Spelt out here, then, is the general result that whilst a symbol determines both a sign and a mode of signification for that sign, and that conversely a sign together with a mode of signification determines a symbol, what a sign may mean on some occasion of its occurrence is a matter not determined by what symbol may there be occurring. A symbol, generally, is not a sign considered together with a signification, but rather a sign considered together with a *mode* of signification.

3.3

This conclusion is not taken as having been decisively established; we have looked here at only at one passage from the Tractatus. Nonetheless, it will be a working hypothesis to be confirmed through the discussions below. Let's turn now to ask: what is a 'mode of signification' that is not simply a signification?

We are told in section 3.323 that in the sentence ‘Green is green’, the two instances of the sign ‘green’ are instances of different symbols, and that this is entailed by the fact that the first is the proper name of a person and the second is an adjective. And something entailed here weaker than difference of meaning (plausibly) is difference of syntactic type. A possible thought will thus be that by ‘mode of signification’ Wittgenstein means syntactic use. Of course, ‘syntax’, for Wittgenstein, will mean logical syntax rather than surface syntax, and the proposal will accordingly be that a mode of signification is a logico-syntactic employment. Support for this suggestion is found in Wittgenstein’s idea of conceptual notation:

In order to avoid [philosophical] errors we must make use of a sign-language that excludes them by not using the same sign for different symbols and by not using in a superficially similar way signs that have different modes of signification: that is to say, a sign language that is governed by *logical* grammar – by logical syntax. (3.325)

In a conceptual notation we will avoid philosophical errors/confusion firstly by not allowing two different symbols to share a sign (a failing displayed in ‘Green is green’), and secondly by not using in a ‘superficially similar way signs that have different modes of signification’. More, this latter is the achievement of a language governed by logical syntax: a language governed by logical syntax achieves a transparency regarding the sameness and difference of modes of signification of its signs. What is achieved, however, by a language governed by logical syntax is, precisely, a transparency regarding the logico-syntactic types of the propositional elements are in play at any point – a transparency, that is, regarding the logico-syntactic employment at any point of the language’s signs. And so the suggestion presents itself: a mode of signification is a logico-syntactic use; a symbol is a sign with a logico-syntactic employment, it is a syntactic element.

Further support for this proposal is to be found in a letter from Wittgenstein to C. K. Ogden concerning the translation of the *Tractatus*:

[I]n order to recognise the symbol in a sign ... we must observe how the sign is used in accordance with the laws of logical syntax. (LO p59)

To recognise the occurrence of a symbol as opposed to that of a mere sign, we must observe how the occurrent sign is being used there ‘in accordance with the laws of logical syntax’, is being used syntactically.

Confirmation of the matter may be gained first by noting that a proposition is, for Wittgenstein, an example of a symbol:

I shall call any part of a proposition that characterises its sense an expression
(or a symbol).
(A proposition is itself an expression.) (3.31)

And then by putting together:

A propositional sign with its mode of depiction is a proposition. (PTLP 3.2)

and:

*If ... then infinitely many propositions of different content follow
LOGICALLY from that first one. And this of itself shews that that
proposition itself was a matter of fact infinitely complex. That is, not the
propositional sign by itself, but it together with its syntactical application.*
(NB p64)

A proposition – a propositional *symbol* – is a propositional sign together with its syntactical application, is a propositional sign together with its mode of signification.

3.4

This last point taken, however, we may now be struck to ask whether propositions being examples of symbols does not demand a rethink of the additional conclusion of section 3.2 of this chapter that symbols do not of themselves determine a meaning. A proposition, it would seem, is something which contains its meaning – a proposition, surely, has a meaning and if two propositions have different meanings then they are different propositions.

Approaching this concern we need first to get clearer as to what kind of ‘thing’ a symbol’s meaning is. Wittgenstein writes:

A proposition is a picture of reality. (4.01)

A picture represents a possible situation in logical space. (2.202)

What a picture represents is its sense. (2.221)

Next to propositions, the other key examples of symbols are *names*:

Names are the simple symbols. (4.24)

Of which we find:

A name means an object. The object is its meaning. (3.203)

These I take to be basic. Without intending it to be understood that there is a single *relation* of meaning going on here (that representing a situation is an achievement of the same kind as standing for an object), I want to recommend a first, naïve understanding of ‘the meaning of a symbol’ such that the meaning of a name is the object it stands for – its referent (‘seine Bedeutung’ (3.203)), and that the meaning of a proposition is the situation it represents – its sense (‘sein Sinn’ (2.221)).⁵⁴

If this is to be held, however, the following will leap out at us:

A proposition communicates a situation to us, and so it must be *essentially* connected with the situation. (4.03)

A proposition is essentially connected with the situation it represents. Here we might seem to have confirmation of our recent suspicion: that a symbol does, after all, contain/determine its meaning (or at least that some of them – propositions – do). Let’s not, however, be hasty. Section 4.03 continues:

⁵⁴ In fact, this ‘naïve’ understanding will not be much developed. The idea of having sense cannot be explored without investigating truth-functionality, and that I shall not do.

And this connection is precisely that it is its logical picture. (4.03)

The essential connection between a proposition and its meaning lies in the fact that the one is a logical picture of the other. But what is involved in that? Looking back in the *Tractatus*, we find:

If a fact is to be a picture, it must have something in common with what it depicts.

There must be something identical in a picture and what it depicts, to enable the one to be a picture of the other at all. (2.16-2.161)

What any picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it – correctly or incorrectly – in any way at all, is logical form, i.e. the form of reality.

A picture whose pictorial form is logical form is called a logical picture. (2.18-2.181)

That a proposition is a logical picture of a situation (its meaning) entails that the proposition and the situation share a logical form. Now we have seen in the last chapter that the logical form of a situation is essential to its nature (in fact exhaustive of its internal nature); it will be equally true that the logical form of a symbol is of the essence of that symbol. Thus the sharing of a logical form will be an *internal* connection between symbol and meaning (between proposition and situation). More, I now want to assert, this identity of logical form exhausts the internal connection between the two; all other connections are external.

That this is indeed so is, I suggest, visible in Wittgenstein's remark, made immediately on introducing the idea of a picture, that:

Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture.

That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches up to it [es reicht bis zu ihr]. (2.151-2.1511)

A picture shares a form with the reality it represents; *that* is how the two are (internally) attached. Confirming this interpretation of 2.1511 is a comment made in *Some Remarks on Logical Form*:

I have said elsewhere that a proposition “reaches up to reality”, and by this I meant that the forms of the entities are contained in the form of the proposition which is about those entities. (SRLF p34)

Continuing, and looking again now to attack the idea that a symbol determines its meaning, we should note that the idea of form stands, in the *Tractatus*, in contrast to that of content. A symbol ‘is the mark of a form and a content’ (3.31); what is marked by a symbol – its meaning – is both a form and a content. If a symbol is to contain the form of that which it marks, but is not, as I have suggested, to contain that which it marks itself, it must be that it does not contain the content of that which it marks. And so we find:

A proposition contains the form, but not the content, of its sense. (3.13)

A proposition and its sense stand in the internal relation of formal identity; external to a proposition is, however, the content of its sense.

What, though, is the content of a situation? In the last chapter we saw that the form of a piece of the world is its logical nature, and indeed that this is exhaustive of the internal nature of that entity. We saw also, however, that two different entities may be of the same form, may have the same internal properties. One thing may be a different thing from another thing even if it is internally (and indeed also externally) indistinguishable (2.0233). What content is, then, – what holds to a thing beyond its internal nature – is *particularity*. The dualism of form and content is the dualism of nature and particularity. A proposition determines the nature, but not the particularity of its sense; it determines the type but not the token. It contains the inner, logical nature of the situation which is its sense, and thereby the *possibility* of representing its sense (2.18, above), but it does not contain that particular situation which is its sense:

A proposition, therefore, does not actually contain its sense, but does contain the possibility of expressing it. (3.13)

We diffuse the tension apparent in the assertions: a symbol does not determine its meaning, a proposition is a symbol, a proposition's meaning is the situation it represents, and a proposition is essentially connected with the situation it represents, by distinguishing a particular situation from the form of that situation (its internal nature). A proposition is essentially connected with the situation it represents in that it determines, of itself, the form of its sense. That determination does not amount, however, to the containment/determination of the very situation itself, for to determine a nature is not to determine a thing. Two non-identical situations may be of the same form; which, if either, of those two is represented by some proposition of that form would be a matter external to that proposition.

The result is quite general. A symbol must determine the (logical) form of its meaning:

The point is only that the logical part of what is signified should be completely determined just by the logical part of the sign and the mode of signification [Bezeichnungsweise]: sign and mode of signification *together* must be logically identical with what is signified. (NB p19)

but it does not determine its content. Whilst a symbol is essentially connected to its meaning by virtue of a shared logical nature, which particular meaning of that nature a symbol may have is a matter external to the symbol.

3.5

We should address at this juncture a section of the Tractatus that on its face tells strongly against the story developed so far. At point 3.326 Wittgenstein writes:

In order to recognise a symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense. (3.326)

In order to recognise a symbol by its sign, this would seem to suggest, we must observe how the sign is used with a meaning. But how could this be required if its meaning were a matter external (in part, at least) to the symbol?

We should not, however, be so quickly alarmed. A clue that this is so is a mismatch between the generality of section 3.326 as regards type of symbol, and the specific type of meaningfulness which is ‘having a sense’. Wittgenstein writes that ‘Only propositions have sense’ (3.3); names (for instance), explicitly, do not (3.144). What does Wittgenstein mean, then, by (apparently, at least) suggesting here that the sign of any type of symbol may be used ‘with a sense’? Ogden translates the section in a way which removes this tension:

In order to recognise the symbol in the sign we must consider the significant use. (3.326)

But Wittgenstein does, however, write in German that it is the *sinnvollen Gebrauch* that we must observe. The matter is cleared up by a letter from Wittgenstein to Ogden discussing precisely this translation issue:

I think “significant” is alright here. The meaning of the prop is: that in order to recognise the symbol in a sign we must look at how this sign is *used* significantly in propositions. I.e. we must observe how the sign is used in accordance with the laws of logical syntax. Thus “significant” here means as much as “syntactically correct”. (LO p59)

In order to recognise a symbol in a sign we must look at the sign’s *syntactic* use. *Sinnvollen*, here, means *syntactic* and not *meaningful*. This is not the sole occasion of such a use, as we shall see.

3.6

A symbol is a sign considered together with its logico-syntactic employment: if this is going to fly alongside the idea from section 3.4 of this chapter that essential to a symbol is a logical form, it must be that a syntactic use is sufficient for a logical form. That this is indeed so is implicit (given our identification of mode of signification with syntactic use) in the quote from page 19 the Notebooks given at the end of section 3.4 above. And in the Tractatus, we find:

A sign does not determine a logical form unless it is taken together with its logico-syntactic employment. (3.327)

But before asking after the nature of the determination going on here, let's note Wittgenstein's insistence here that a sign does not, of itself, determine a logical form – and the consequence that meaning attaches not to signs but to symbols. The condition on picturing, that the picture must determine the logical form of that which it depicts, generalises: for one thing to have another as its meaning, the signifier must of itself determine the logical form of the signified. A sign does not determine a logical form unless it taken together with its syntactic use – unless it is taken as belonging to a particular symbol; to say that a sign has a meaning is thus to say that that sign belongs to a symbol which has a meaning.

(One reason to be clear on this is that Wittgenstein himself sometimes speaks as if it is signs which (primarily) mean things. For instance:

The simple signs employed in propositions are called names.

A name means an object. The object is its meaning. (3.202-3.203)

(This is odd: we have seen Wittgenstein write, in section 4.24, that 'names are the simple symbols'. There is, then, an inconsistency of use somewhere along the line – of 'simple', 'name', 'sign' or 'symbol'. It is, I suggest, with the word 'name' – Wittgenstein uses it at times to mean elements of propositional signs (3.2), and at other times to mean elements of propositions (4.22).))

Wittgenstein, I have been suggesting, considers language at three different levels: at the level of perceptible elements (signs), at the level of syntactic elements (symbols) and at the level of meaningful elements (symbols together with a meaning). Syntactic elements are perceptible elements together with a mode of signification (a syntax), and meaningful elements are syntactic elements together with a meaning. Interest is focused, in the *Tractatus*, almost exclusively on the middle level, the level of symbols. This is the level at which logic takes grip; a sign does not by itself determine a logical form (3.327), and matters of meaning are extraneous to logic ('in logical syntax the meaning of a sign should never play a role' (3.33), 'the rules of logical syntax must go without saying, once we know how [*how*, not *what*] each individual sign signifies' (3.334)).

Confirming again this tripartition is an aspect of Wittgenstein's thoughts which we have so far ignored: the idea of a projection. At the introduction of the idea of a proposition, Wittgenstein writes:

In a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived by the senses.

We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation.

The method of projection is to think the sense of the proposition.

I call the sign with which we express a thought a propositional sign. – And a proposition is a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world.

A proposition includes all that the projection includes, but not what is projected.

Therefore, though what is projected is not itself included, its possibility is.

A proposition, therefore, does not actually contain its sense, but does contain the possibility of expressing it.

(‘The content of a proposition’ means the content of a proposition that has sense.)

A proposition contains the form, but not the content, of its sense. (3.1-3.13)

And the comment we saw above from *Some Remarks on Logical Form* continues with:

I have said elsewhere that a proposition “reaches up to reality”, and by this I meant that the forms of the entities are contained in the form of the proposition which is about these entities. For the sentence, together with the mode of projection which projects reality into the sentence, determines the logical form of the entities. (SRLF p34)

So we have reality (a possible situation), a propositional sign, and a projective relation by which the sign is used as a projection of the former. The propositional sign (the projection) in that projective relation is the proposition. The proposition does *not* include what is projected (the reality (the situation), its sense), but it does include the form of what is projected, and so the *possibility* of expressing that reality. (Of itself, the proposition does not

contain its sense; of itself it contains, only, the *possibility of expressing* it.) Here again, then, the three parts – sign, sign-in-projection, and sign-in-projection plus reality projected (the whole projective affair) – and we may expand our identification of mode of signification and syntactic employment to include mode of projection. To:

A propositional sign with its mode of depiction [mode of signification] is the proposition. (PTLP 3.2)

We can add:

A proposition is a projection [a propositional sign] with the method governing it. (PTLP 3.21)

A mode of signification is a syntactic employment is a method of projection.

3.7

With this added to the picture, let's return now to ask after the determination of a logical form. The insistence of 3.327 that a sign does not determine a logical form unless it is taken together with its logico-syntactic employment is not a one off:

Names signalise what is common to a single form and a single content. – Only *together with* their syntactic use do they signalise *one particular* logical form. (NB p53)

We have become clear, then, that names may and do stand for the most various forms, and that it is only the syntactical application that signalises the form that is to be presented. (NB p59)

And neither is the insistence of 2.18 that what signifies must determine the logical form of its meaning:

If a proposition is to have a sense then the syntactical employment of its parts must be settled in advance. (NB p64)

If a sign is to mean something then it must determine a form, and this is achieved through, and only through, its having a syntactical application. But what is a syntactic application?

Well, the idea of logical syntax is modelled on that of the syntax of English (German etc.). Such a language has a variety of marks in its vocabulary which divide roughly into words and punctuation marks. The words will then themselves be divided into further categories – into such groupings as *names*, *verbs*, *copulae*, *adjectives* etc. (some word-marks (e.g. ‘green’) may appear in more than one grouping). And with these groupings in place, the rules of grammar (syntax) state how the different types of words can be put together (with the use, perhaps, of punctuation marks) to form sentences. (In English, ‘a b c’ is a sentence if ‘a’ is a name, ‘b’ a copula and ‘c’ an adjective, but not if all three are verbs.) The idea will then be that a word’s syntactical application is given by the rules determining how it, as a word of a particular type, may combine with words of the various other types to form sentences.

Abstracting from this (and looking to clean it up), we can say: an atomic syntactical system is a system with a vocabulary of marks and a number of rules governing the combinations of those marks to form (well-formed) formulae. And crucially, the idea of combination here is such that the formulae produced are *facts* (atoms), not mere strings. A formula consists of certain marks from the vocabulary combined together in a certain way (which manner of combination may itself involve marks from the vocabulary). In a certain system, the formula written ‘F(a)’ will be the fact that ‘F’ and ‘a’ are combined in a certain way – in that way in which x and y are combined when y stands alone inside brackets to the immediate left of which is x; in another system the formula written in the same way will consist of ‘F(a’ and ‘)’ combined in that way in which x and y are combined when x is immediately to the left of y. (In a third system, it might be the fact that ‘F a’ and ‘()’ have been inserted into (written on top of) each other.) A formula of an atomic syntactic system divides into elements and consists of those elements combined together in a certain way.

Here we are well in tune with Wittgenstein’s remarks about propositional signs:

What constitutes a propositional sign is that in it its elements (the words) stand in a determinate relation to one another.

A propositional sign is a fact. (3.14)

Although a propositional sign is a fact, this is obscured by the usual form of expression in writing or print.

For in a printed proposition, for example, no essential difference is apparent between a propositional sign and a word.

That is what made it possible for Frege to call a proposition a composite name.)

The essence of a propositional sign is very clearly seen if we imagine one composed of spatial objects (such as tables, chairs, and books) instead of written signs.

Then the spatial arrangement of these things will express the sense of the proposition. (3.143-3.1431)

A propositional sign is absolutely not a string, a blend (3.141) of words, of marks. It is the fact that certain of those marks are arranged together there in a certain way (spatially, perhaps). Let's sharpen things up further now with the idea of an atomic syntactic system:

An atomic syntactic system S has:

a vocabulary $V = \{x_i\}$ of (perceptible) marks,

a set $T = \{(M_j, j): j \in J\}$ of syntactic types where $M_j \subseteq V$ and J is an indexing set, and

a set $C = \{c_i\}$ of manners of combination of (perceptible) marks.

The combination in manner $c \in C$ of the marks x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n is denoted by $c(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)$.

The system S is then defined by:

For each manner of combination $c \in C$, there is a unique rule of S of the form:

$$x_1 \in M_{l(c,1)}, x_2 \in M_{l(c,2)}, \dots, x_n \in M_{l(c,n)} \Leftrightarrow c(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) \in F$$

where f is some (sufficiently partial) function from $C \times N$ to J . Set F is (called) the set of formulae of S ; it contains no members besides those provided by the system's rules of combination.

Handwritten notes:
 1^o F
 c mu 2
 f u h $?$ f u h
 u m u i n t e r e d

Crucial to note about this definition is that each manner of combination has a unique rule, and that that rule is of the form of an equivalence. What is not allowed in a *syntactic* system is that, say, $c(s,t) \in F$ and $c(u,v) \in F$, but $c(s,v) \notin F$. Each position in each manner of combination determines a set of marks which may figure in that position in a formula; whether or not a combination from C of certain marks from V is a formula depends only on the marks' memberships of such sets, and not on any other property (such as the particular identity) of the marks.

(Note here that there is no guarantee that the M_j will be disjoint (or even distinct) (that different symbols may not share a sign (3.321 above, and see below)), and nor is there that elements of the M_j will not figure in the specifications of the elements of C (that certain signs will not also be punctuation marks).)

And, saying that $X \in T$ occurs exactly m (≥ 0) times in combination d if, and only if, $X = (M_j, j)$ and exactly m of $f(d, i)$ are equal to j , we define:

Two atomic syntactic systems S_1 and S_2 with manners of combination C_1 and C_2 and sets of syntactic mark-types T_1 and T_2 , are isomorphic if, and only if, there exists a bijection $f: C_1 \rightarrow C_2$ and a bijection $g: T_1 \rightarrow T_2$ (i.e. a bijection $(f, g): C_1 \times T_1 \rightarrow C_2 \times T_2$) such that, for all $c \in C_1$ and $X \in T_1$, $(X \text{ occurs } n \text{ times in } c) \Leftrightarrow (g(X) \text{ occurs } n \text{ times in } f(c))$.

And finally we define, of a system S with combination manners C and syntactic types T , for each $A \in T$,

$$G_A = \{X: \text{there is an isomorphism } (f, g): C \times T \rightarrow C \times T \text{ such that } g(A) = X\}$$

With which we note that the G_X partition T : The G_X cover T , for $X \in G_X$ (put (f, g) to identity), and they are distinct: $X \in G_A \cap G_B$ implies exists isomorphisms (f_1, g_1) , (f_2, g_2) on S such that $g_1(A) = g_2(B) = X$. But then $(f_1, f_2^{-1}, g_1, g_2^{-1})$ is an isomorphism on S such that $g_1, g_2^{-1}(A) = B$. Thus $B \in G_A$, and so $G_B \subseteq G_A$. And vice versa.

We may now say that a system S with manners of combination set C and set of syntactic mark-types T is symmetrical with respect to $Y \subseteq T$, iff there exists $A \in T$ such that $Y = G_A \neq \{A\}$. Else S is asymmetrical.

(A few examples. Consider the systems defined by formulae sets:

$$\begin{aligned} F1 &= \{c1(x,y): x,y \in A\} \\ F2 &= \{c2(x,y): x \in B, y \in C\} \\ F3 &= \{c3(x,y): x,y \in D\} \cup \{c4(x,y): x,y \in D\} \\ F4 &= \{c5(x,y): x \in E, y \in F\} \cup \{c6(x,y): x,y \in G\} \\ F5 &= \{c6(x,y): x \in H, y \in I\} \cup \{c7(x,y): x,y \in J\} \\ F6 &= \{c8(x,y): x \in K, y \in L\} \cup \{c9(x,y): x \in L, y \in M\} \\ F7 &= \{c10(x,y,z): x,y \in N, z \in O\} \end{aligned}$$

where the c_i and the A, B etc. are all distinct. Here only $F4$ and $F5$ are isomorphic; $F2$ and $F6$ are symmetrical with respect to $\{B,C\}$ and $\{K,M\}$ respectively, $F1, F3, F4, F5$ and $F7$ are asymmetrical.

(A Russellian atomic system could be characterised by: $F_R = \{c_n(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n): x_1 \in U_{n-1}, x_2, \dots, x_n \in Te\}$, where U_{n-1} is the set of signs for universals of degree $n-1$, and Te is the set of signs for terms.))

3.8

In the *Tractatus*, of course, things complicate. In two directions in particular: first with formulae containing marks indicating truth functions, and second with those containing signs which disappear on analysis (i.e. signs which have a definition). Both of these, however, have to do with truth functional analysis, with non-atomic propositions, and my focus throughout this work has been, and will be, largely with the atomic (and subatomic) rather than the molecular. Wittgenstein writes, in *Some Remarks on Logical Form*:

Our analysis, if carried far enough, must come to the point where it reaches propositional forms which are not themselves composed of simpler propositional forms. We must eventually reach the ultimate connection of

the terms, the immediate connection which cannot be broken without destroying the propositional form as such. The propositions which represent this ultimate connexion of terms I call, after B. Russell, atomic propositions. They, then, are the kernels of every proposition, *they* contain the material and all the rest is only a development of this material. (SRLF p29)

My concern in this thesis is predominantly with the material, not with its development; it is with the ultimate forms, not with forms composed out of those ultimate forms. In saying that, however, I don't of course mean to suggest that the idea of truth-functionality is a matter external to the elementary propositions – on the contrary, Wittgenstein's notion of a proposition's having sense already involves truth-functionality (and so: 'an elementary proposition really contains all logical operations in itself' (5.47)) – but rather that there are important aspects of the theory of atomic thought that can be explored, to begin with at least, without bringing the idea of a truth function into direct play. 'An elementary proposition consists of names' (4.22): whilst the work of this chapter on symbols has, in many places, a range more broad than just this, it is this idea that I hope most to illuminate.

So back to atomic syntactic systems. The purpose of the above semi-formal work should be stated: These systems are systems of combinations of marks. How certain marks may combine with each other in a particular system is a matter of the membership of those marks of certain sets which we may call the system's syntactic types. And next we may say: a syntactic *use* of a mark is the role that mark has in some syntactic system S as a possible element of members of F , the set of formulae of S , by virtue of its membership of a particular member of T , the set of syntactic mark-types of S (i.e. by virtue of its membership, for some $j \in J$, of M_j). Of course, this use is bound to the particular modes of combination of S – these figure in the members of F –, but this tie is something away from which we can abstract: If S_1 and S_2 are asymmetrical isomorphic systems as above with isomorphism (f, g) , then the role a mark has in S_1 by virtue of its membership of an element X of T_1 is, the thought will be, structurally equivalent to the role in S_2 had by a member of $g(X)$ by virtue of its membership of that set. These systems are isomorphic, and these two system-specific roles are instantiations of the same place within the shared structure. Such a place within such a structure which may be determined by a variety of elements-in-syntactic-use of a variety of different isomorphic systems (i.e. systems instantiating the same structure) might, I suggest,

be called a *form*. This is how I recommend we begin to understand what a form is such that it is determined by a sign's syntactic employment.

What is shared by two isomorphic systems is a structure of abstract combinatorial possibilities. A place in such a structure is defined by its relations of combinatorial possibility with all other places in the structure. And the 'combinations' in play in the structure are, as suggested, inconcrete: the isomorphisms abstract away from any particular set *C* of combinations of marks, leaving us with an entirely formal idea of combination. More, the nature of the structure's combinations is given in the nature of the structure's places, and the nature of the structure's places is given in the nature of its combinations – these two are one and the same, both being determined by the syntactic uses of the signs of a system instantiating the structure, by the rules definitive of any such particular system.

Mathematical as this idea may seem, let's recall from the last chapter what was said of objects: An object's internal nature (its form) is its combinatorial possibilities with other objects. These combinations which objects may enter into are immediate and logical (formal). More, the nature of these combinations is given in the nature of the objects – the combination is nothing more than the realising of a possibility already inherent in the objects. And, of course, vice versa: the internal nature of the objects are, as was said, exhausted by the types of combinations into which they may enter.

It is often felt that Wittgenstein's ideas of a sharing of form between language and the world involve something worth calling an isomorphism. Standardly, though, it is put that the system of combinatorial possibilities of signs in a language (that, say, 'a' and 'b' may, according to certain rules, be written either side of 'R') must be isomorphic to the system of combinatorial possibilities of objects in the world (that, say, a and b may, due to their being (say) physical objects (to their being of *that* form), be next to each other). There will, the idea is, be a mapping of from modes of combination of name-signs to modes of combination of objects such that two name-signs may (according to certain rules) be combined in a certain way in language just in case the objects they name may be combined (as a result of their internal natures) in the image of that way under the mapping. Sign-system and world thus co-instantiate a certain formal structure. This I take to be a fundamental mistake. What I want to suggest instead is that the structure which is instantiated by a sign language is not equally *instantiated* by the world, but rather *is* the world. Or perhaps better: a place in a formal

structure determined by a sign in a sign language by virtue of the ways in which it may, according to certain rules, combine to form formulae is not equally determined by an object in the world by virtue of the ways it may, according to its nature, combine to form facts, rather: the place in the formal structure determined by the sign *is* the nature (the form) of the object. Language is not isomorphic to the world, the two of them manifesting, in their different ways, the same structure. The world does not *manifest* a formal structure in some way, rather: the internal nature of things is exhausted by their formal structural possibilities. That was a central point of the last chapter. Logical form is the form of reality (2.18); beyond (the possibility of) logical structure, there is, in the world, only simple, brute particularity (content). What are isomorphic in this area are, instead, two different languages – an isomorphism being given in the rules for translating between them. (The difference here is between being able to mean the same as and being able to mean.)

In our syntactic systems, there was an independence of combination set C and syntactic type set T, both being given substantial specifications. In ‘the system of the world’, however, the combinations and the element types (the forms of objects) each give the other, and neither is susceptible of specification beyond the system. And as it is with the world, so it is with the system-structures instantiated by isomorphic syntactic systems.

3.9

That was perhaps not entirely transparent. It may help briefly connect up a few pieces. A mark together with a syntactic use determines a form – determines, that is, a place within a formal structure of combinatorial possibilities. Such a structure is of the ilk of the (formal) ‘system’ of objects and their combination which is the world. And the point will then be that *language*, or indeed any system within which representation is possible, will instantiate not any such structure but *the structure of reality*.⁵⁵ Any two (potentially) representative systems will be isomorphic, they will share the structure of reality. The forms of (determined by) the elements of a representative system will be *logical* forms, the forms of reality (2.18), and such elements may therefore have a meaning – they may mean anything which shares their (logical) form. (Of course, and as discussed at length in the last chapter, this structure of reality, *logical* form, is not discernable a priori.)

⁵⁵ This thought opens the way for a realist reading of the Tractatus. See the appendix below.

A symbol is thus a (perceptible) mark with a role as an element of a system instantiating the structure of reality (instantiating the structure of, not sharing a structure with). A sign will be the mark of a symbol, and a meaningful symbol will be a symbol to which a meaning has been assigned. And what is essential in a symbol, in order for it to mean what it does/can, is the logical form it determines – i.e. that it occupy a particular type of place within a system instantiating the structure of reality. The rest – the particularities of the system within which it has that place – is inessential to the purpose it serves as a representative of something in the world:

A proposition possesses essential and accidental features.

Accidental features are those that result from the particular way in which the propositional sign is produced. Essential features are those without which the proposition could not express its sense.

So what is essential in a proposition is what all propositions that can express the same sense have in common.

And similarly, in general, what is essential in a symbol is what all symbols that can serve the same purpose have in common.

So one could say that the real name of an object was what all symbols that signified it had in common. Thus, one by one, all kinds of composition would prove to be unessential to a name. (3.34-3.3411)

To repeat: what is essential to its linguistic (representative) purpose is a symbol's place within the structure of reality; the non-formal features of the sign system in which the symbol holds that place are inessential.

3.10

Let's turn now to see the working of the requirement of Wittgenstein's that the elements of a proposition/picture be connected *in the same way* as are/would be the elements of the fact it represents:

The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way. (2.15)

A amalgam of failures regarding the understanding of objects, signs and symbols have very frequently led interpreters of the Tractatus to find this requirement difficult to accommodate. That this is so is indicative of the seriousness of those failures, for I take it that this requirement lies at the very heart of the picture theory. Indeed, it pretty much *is* the picture theory. It may be worth, by way of comparison with the account offered, quickly running through a standard (mis)interpretation of Wittgenstein's ideas.

First then, Tractarian objects are to be compared, in logical status, with Fregean ones. They are units which may stand in various (contingent, external) relations to each other, such, perhaps, as being next to, being bigger than etc. – worldly relations. These (contingent, worldly) relations are not themselves objects; they hold *between* objects and their doing so constitutes a fact (the existence of a state of affairs). Next, an elementary proposition is a fact – it is the fact that certain names stand together in a certain way. Names here are physical marks, and the way in which they stand together is again worldly (physical) – the proposition 'aRb' is the fact that the name 'a' and the name 'b' stand together on either side of an 'R'. Finally, the names of a proposition refer to objects, and the proposition says that the objects referred to by its names are related in a way corresponding to the way in which the names are related in the proposition.

Of course, this is a simplifying caricature, but not much of one, it seems to me. Sophisticate it slightly with an idea that objects come in types, and that not all types of objects can stand in all relations (only spatial objects can be next to each other) (the form of an object), and that correspondingly (derivatively, perhaps) certain combinations of names don't make sense, and you have the basis for an historically popular reading of the Tractarian metaphysics and philosophy of language.

Whilst recognising that Wittgenstein's writing is often obscure, I find it surprising that such readings have so frequently been put forward. My objections to the metaphysics half are set out in the last chapter; it's time now for the philosophy of language. First of all, there is here a failure to distinguish sign from symbol: signs – marks – may stand on the page on either side of an 'R'; the combination of symbols is not of that sort at all. Most basic, however, is the foisting on Wittgenstein of a theory of semantic connections of a type he not only never deigns to mention, but further implicitly denies. Alongside the referring of names to things, there is, on the going (mis)interpretation, the correspondence between the way the names in

an elementary proposition are related to make that proposition and the way the proposition says that the objects its elements refer to are related in the fact. That two names stand on either side of an 'R' is to mean, perhaps, that their two referents are touching one another (or whatever). But whilst a great deal is made in the Tractatus of the reference of names to things, one has very much to scrape around for passages which can be (mis)read as discussing such a second 'fundamental feature' of the Tractarian semantics. Worse, Wittgenstein writes:

A proposition is a picture of reality. (4.021)

The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way. (2.15)

What an elementary proposition says is that the referents of its elements (names (4.22)) are related to one another *in the same way* as are those elements in the proposition. What semantic 'relation' there is here between 'ways of being related' is *identity*, and that is not a relation at all. There are, it was right to suppose, two fundamental features of the picture theory, but these are: that names stand for things, and that the standing of names in a certain way in a proposition says that things stand together in just that same way.

Objects, we saw in the last chapter, form states of affairs by standing together in immediate concatenation; how then do names stand together in an elementary proposition? In our atomic syntactic systems, elements of the vocabulary V stand together in such worldly relations as being to the left of, being on either side of an 'R' etc. (whatever) – the combinations given in C. These, however, are the combinings of *signs* to form *propositional signs*, and names, we have seen, are not signs but symbols; propositional signs are not propositions. Symbols, it was argued, are to be considered as signs taken together with a logico-syntactic use. These determine a place within the formal combinatorial structure of reality (a logical form) and, I want to now suggest, have combination within that formal structure. Signs (perceptible aspects of symbols) combine as allowed by a particular syntactic system instantiating the structure of reality; symbols combine as things determining (having) places within that combinatorial structure – their combinations are the formal combinations held in the structure of reality. And that is to say that their combinations are the combinations of reality, of objects.

Symbols are, certainly, tied to a particular syntactic system – equally they are tied to their signs which are mere marks and may, perhaps, be used across many different (and non-isomorphic) syntactic systems –, but they determine, they *occupy*, a place within the combinatorial structure of reality (the structure instantiated by the system in which they live), Symbols *hold* certain *logico-formal* combinatorial possibilities (this is their place in the structure of reality), and it is into these logico-formal combinations (the combinations of reality) that they enter to form propositions. Symbols are logical entities (they have a logical form); their combinations, as those of objects, are *logical*. That, I suggest, is how we should take Wittgenstein's key thought that a proposition's elements are combined in the same way as those of the fact it represents. (More below on the nature of this shared 'way'.)

(If Wittgenstein had subscribed a priori to a subject-predicate atomic form, then he would say that whilst the signs of a subject-predicate proposition combine in a certain way on the page (perhaps the subject sign is written in brackets after the predicate sign) to form the propositional sign, the symbols – the subject and the predicate of the proposition – combine logically in precisely that way as do their referents if the proposition is true. Working with Russell, Wittgenstein would say that in the proposition 'A is red' the symbol 'A' and the symbol 'is red' combine in just that way as do A, the particular, and redness, the universal, in the fact that A is red.)

3.11

This all said, we need quickly to mention a slight complication issuing from the possibility of symmetrical systems. Consider a 'world' in which there are two types of object, type 1 and type 2, and one mode of combination in which an object of type 1 is combined with an object of type 2. Here, we want to say, the two forms are distinct but in a certain sense 'similar'. The nature of an object of type 1 is exhausted by its combinatorial possibilities with objects of type 2 (and the fact that there are only two types of object and it cannot combine with objects of its own type); the nature of an object of type 2 is exhausted by its combinatorial possibilities with objects of type 1 (and the fact that there are only two types of object and it cannot combine with objects of its own type); the nature of the combinations possible between objects is exhausted by the fact that they are combinations of objects of type 1 with those of type 2 (and the fact that this is the only type of possible combination). But with this, the symmetry is such that there is no way of distinguishing type 1 from type 2 other than by

saying that they are different. (Contrast the ‘world’ in which all states of affairs are composed in the same way of two objects of one type and a single object of a second).

And consider now a syntactic system instantiating the structure of such a world. It will be symmetrical, as defined above. And what this means is that a syntactic use of a sign of such a system will not single out one rather than the other of the two similar places in the structure. There is nothing by which one rather than the other can be singled out. This is felt to be problematic, for we want to hold both that the two places in the structure are different places, they are different forms, and that a syntactic use determines a form. Almost, we want to say here that the two forms are two tokens of the same type, and then that a syntactic use determines a form-type but not a form token; symmetrical systems are those where there is more than one form of the same type. (Of course, we certainly don’t want to see Wittgenstein as (implicitly) asserting a priori that reality is asymmetrical – whether or not it is will be shown a posteriori in a concept script.) Unwelcome as this complication might be, I should not take as a failing of the suggested line on syntactic use. If two forms are indistinguishable, then a syntactic use cannot distinguish between them.

3.12

So a symbol is, essentially, an element of a logico-syntactic system (a syntactic system instantiating *logical* structure, the structure of reality). Let’s move on now to the question: when do they occur?

As do signs, symbols, it would seem obvious to suppose, recur. But where? Not, one suspects, merely wherever their signs do. Here our identifications from the end of section 3.6 of this chapter – a symbol is a sign considered together with a mode of signification, a mode of projection, a syntactic use – may promise to lend a hand. The idea of a way a mode of signification is perhaps not terribly suggestive, but that of a mode of projection seems to require that what is projected be a situation (what would a projection of a (simple) thing be?), and so to require that a sign occurring with a particular mode of projection (a symbol) occurs there within a propositional sign with a mode of projection (a proposition). And the same can be said for the idea of a syntactic use: to use a sign, say, adjectivally, as an adjective, seems to require the presence there of a proposition; syntax is, seemingly, something which takes place within propositions. Of course, I have jumped here from the ‘employment in the syntactic system’ to the ‘particular deployment’ idea of ‘use’, but these indications are, I suggest, to be

taken seriously. I shall assert: Symbols are, essentially, elements of logico-syntactic systems, *and they occur only within occurrences of the propositions of those systems*. This is hugely important.

Frege, let's recall from the last chapter, is involved in an ontological variety consisting of the various types of concept (or, more broadly, of function) and of the type *object* – a variety corresponding rigidly to which is a logical variety of expression-types: expressions of a certain logical type may refer to, and only to, entities of a corresponding ontological type. Next, let's recall that, whilst we dealt with the matter of completeness, of 'self-standingness', in the context primarily of Russell, we noted also that Frege considers his concepts (of all types) to contrast with his objects in that a concept is incomplete, unsaturated, and hence 'cannot exist on its own' (LM p81) (is *unselbständig*). And what I want now to bring to attention is that this contrast of saturatedness/unsaturatedness amongst the Fregean entity-types is counterparted amongst the Fregean expression-types: Whilst '[t]he expression for a function is in need of completion, [is] unsaturated' (BLA p34), '[t]he names of objects ... are saturated, like the objects themselves' (BLA p36).

In the last chapter I argued that Tractarian objects are, in a certain sense, incomplete, and that what are complete in the *Tractatus* are not objects but facts. Here in this chapter I shall suggest that this contrast within the ontological realm has, as it does in Frege, a linguistic counterpart: Tractarian names are, in a certain sense, incomplete expressions, the complete expressions being not names but propositions. The self-standing units of the Tractarian world, we have seen, are not things (object, entities of reference) but facts. And corresponding to this, I want to press, is that the self-standing units of language (the self-standing symbols) are not names but propositions. As objects figure in the world only within facts, so names (name-symbols) occur only within occurrences of propositions.

Commenting on section 1.1 of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein wrote, in 1930:

1.1, "The world is the totality of facts and not of things". What the world is given by description and not by a list of objects. So words have no sense except in propositions, and the proposition is the unit of language. (LWL p119)

Words have no sense except in propositions. Recall here section 3.326 and Wittgenstein's explanation to Ogden thereof:

In order to recognise the symbol in the sign we must consider the significant [*sinnvollen*] use. (3.326) (Pears and McGuinness write: '... observe how it is used with a sense')

I think "significant" is alright here. The meaning of this prop is: that in order to recognise the symbol in a sign we must look at how this sign is *used* significantly in propositions. I.e. we must observe how the sign is used in accordance with the laws of logical syntax. Thus "significant" [*sinnvollen*] here means as much as "syntactically correct". (LO p59)

In order to recognise the symbol in the sign we must look at how the sign is used significantly (is used in accordance with the laws of syntax) *in propositions*. The syntactic use of signs is, Wittgenstein says, a use *in propositions*. The use of a sign-token by virtue of which it is the perceptible aspect of the occurrence of a symbol is a use essentially within a proposition; symbols occur only within occurrences of propositions. As the unit of the world is the fact and not the thing, so the unit of language – the unit of *syntax* – is the proposition and not the name. Syntax is something which there is only *within* propositions; sub-propositional symbols are essentially incomplete.

The incompleteness of objects, I argued in the last chapter, consists (from a certain aspect) of this: that the possibilities of an object to occur in facts are constitutive of, rather than resultant from, its essential nature. In line with this, we should now see, is the model proposed above for understanding what a name is under which its essential syntactic nature is to be thought of not as something which determines a place within a certain structure of formal combinatorial possibilities but rather *as just such a place*. What a name is, an entity of logical syntax, is not something which fixes certain combinatorial possibilities with other names; rather its form consists of its combinatorial possibilities with other names.

More in this stream, we should seem that in marking (as we did above) Wittgenstein's assertion at 2.151 that in an elementary proposition the names are connected in the same way as are the objects they stand for in the atomic fact which makes the proposition true, we are

again committed to the incompleteness of names. The combination of objects to form atomic facts is a matter of *concatenation*: if names are to combine together just as do objects then they too must *concatenate* and this means that they too must be copulative, must be incomplete. What is responsible for a unity beyond itself is not there self-standing. At section 4.22 of the Tractatus, Wittgenstein writes:

An elementary proposition consists of names. It is a nexus, a concatenation of names.

It is obvious that the analysis of propositions must bring us to elementary propositions which consist of names in immediate combination. (4.22-4.221)

And we may look again at:

An expression presupposes the forms of all the propositions in which it can occur. It is the common characteristic mark of a class of propositions

It is therefore presented by means of the general form of the propositions that it characterizes.

In fact, in this form the expression will be *constant* and everything else *variable*.

Thus an expression is presented by means of a variable whose values are the propositions that contain the expression.

(In the limiting case the variable becomes a constant, the expression becomes a proposition.)

I call such a variable a 'propositional variable'. (3.311-3.313)

The combination of names to form elementary propositions is indeed a matter of immediate concatenation, and a name, as any sub-propositional symbol (expression), is presented not as a self standing unit (as is, say, a Fregean name) but rather by means of a variable whose values are all the propositions (the complete expressions) of which it is a part. To investigate this last point in any detail would, however, take us too far afield. Wittgenstein's idea of a propositional variable and its connections with and roots in Frege and Russell is a chapter size topic (at least). What we can do, however, is explore further the idea that the proposition is the unit of syntax through an examination of two of its immediate *consequences*, one regarding meaningfulness – that it is only in the context of a proposition that signs have

meaning – and one regarding logical nonsense – the idea that ‘logic must look after itself’ (5.473).

3.13

Taking the second of these first, we may note Wittgenstein writing at the start of the Notebooks:

It must in a certain sense be impossible for us to go wrong in logic. This is already partly expressed by saying: Logic must take care of itself. This is an extremely profound and important insight. (NB p2)

It must be impossible for us to go wrong in logic. This is extremely important and profound, but what does it mean? Turning to the Tractatus, we find:

Logic must look after itself.

If a sign is *possible*, then it is also capable of signifying. Whatever is possible in logic is also permitted. (The reason why ‘Socrates is identical’ means nothing is that there is no property called ‘identical’. The proposition is nonsensical because we have failed to make an arbitrary determination and not because the symbol, in itself, would be illegitimate.)

In a certain sense, we cannot make mistakes in logic.

Self evidence, which Russell talked so much about, can become dispensable in logic, only because language itself prevents every logical mistake. – What makes logic a priori is the *impossibility* of illogical thought. (5.473-5.4731)

Frege says that any legitimately constructed proposition must have a sense. And I say that any possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and, if it has no sense, that can only be because we have failed to give a *meaning* to some of its constituents.

(Even if we think we have done so.)

Thus the reason why ‘Socrates is identical’ says nothing is that we have not given *any adjectival* meaning to the word ‘identical’. For when it appears as a sign for identity, it symbolises in an entirely different way – the signifying

relation is a different one: the two symbols have only the sign in common, and that is an accident. (5.4733)

We cannot make mistakes in logic; language itself prevents every logical mistake. What, though, would (*per impossibile*) be a logical mistake? What is being prevented here?

Section 5.4731 tells us that what is impossible, what is prevented by language, is an *illogical thought*. So a logical mistake is something which issues in an illogical thought; what, though, is an illogical thought?

Here we may look to the ‘Socrates is identical’ example. This, we are to imagine, is put forward by an interlocutor as an example of an illogical thought. And what ‘Socrates is identical’ claims to be, is, I take it, an example of symbols being wrongly put together. A symbol has a form – this is its combinability with other symbols of the language to form propositions –, and we should not put it together with other symbols in a way which goes against that form. So to do would be to commit a logical mistake. The result would be not a legitimate proposition (a legitimate combination of symbols), but an illegitimate one; it would be a (logical) nonsense, an illogical thought. If *m* is a mode in which objects of form *f*₂ and are combined with objects of form *f*₁ to form atomic facts, then objects of distinct form *f*₃ cannot combine in mode *m* with objects of form *f*₁. There is no such thing as that; the objects don’t go. But it is *we* who, in language, put symbols together. We put together in mode *m* symbols of form *f*₂ and *f*₁ – this makes a proposition –, what, though, if we put together in that mode symbols of form *f*₃ and *f*₁? That, surely, would be a logical mistake, and what we get is something we could call an ‘illogical proposition’ – something which says (assuming the symbols to be meaningful) that an object of form *f*₁ and an object of form *f*₃ are combined in a way in which they cannot, logically, combine. We would have a proposition with a logically impossible sense, a ‘logical nonsense’.

Further evidence that by ‘logical mistake’ here, Wittgenstein means the illegitimate combining of symbols is found in a remark dictated to Moore a few months before the beginning of the Notebooks:

An illogical language would be one in which, e.g., you could put an *event* into a hole. (NB p108)

It goes against the logical nature of events that they can be put in holes; in an illogical language, however, illogical propositions are constructible, and so it could be said that a certain event is in a hole. But Wittgenstein asserts that there is no such thing as a logical mistake. There is no such thing as an illogical proposition (a proposition with a logically impossible sense (a proposition which asserts that an event is in a hole)); language cannot be illogical. How not? How is 'Socrates is identical' (or 'I buried his coming to tea in the garden') not an illogical proposition?

Well the first thing we need to recognise here is that the suggestion that 'it is *we* who, in language, put symbols together' is highly misleading. What we 'put together', in the first instance, are not symbols but signs. Certainly, it is in the combination by us of signs in certain ways (on the page, say) that symbols occur combined together, but what we do not do is pick up symbols and then put them together as we see fit. It is not sufficient for the occurrence of a combination of the symbols 'Socrates' and 'identical' occurring in the propositions 'Socrates is dead' and 'These chairs are identical' respectively that we write the sign 'Socrates is identical' on the page. Symbols are signs together with a logical form, but the two are not magically glued together; there is no guarantee that wherever the sign occurs it will bear there a certain logical form. And to reply here: well the signs have here the same *meaning* here in 'Socrates is identical' as they do in 'Socrates is dead' and 'These chairs are identical', I *mean* the same things by them, and so they will with that have the same forms (for as we have seen the signifier shares a form with what is signified), would be hopelessly naïve. We do not at will attach meanings to signs any more than we at will attach forms to them.

Diffused, then, is any impetus for thinking that illogical propositions can be brazenly constructed through the putting together of certain signs (along, perhaps, with certain mental acts of meaning), but on what basis does Wittgenstein make the further step that there can be no such thing as an illogical proposition? Might there not be *some* background against which writing the sign 'Socrates is identical' will make for the occurrence of an ill-formed symbol?

The reply here is immediate from the work above. The proposition is the unit of syntax, and this means that there are symbols as opposed merely to signs only within what is already a proposition, what is already a legitimate logical whole. It was presented that the use of a sign-token by virtue of which it is the perceptible aspect of the occurrence of a symbol is a

use essentially within a proposition; there is no such thing, therefore, as the use of a sign making, in any context, for the occurrence of an illegitimate symbol – for the occurrence of a symbol which is not a part of a (well-formed) proposition. *There can be nothing illegitimate in logic, for there is logic only within what is already legitimate.* As what we find in the world, in the first instance, are not things but facts, things being found only by ‘looking inside’ facts, so what we find in language, in the first instance, are not names but propositions, and names (and indeed all sub-propositional symbols) are found only by ‘looking inside’ propositions. Thus there is, in Wittgenstein, no ungrammatical: there is only grammatical and agrammatical.

Let’s return now, with this in hand, to Wittgenstein’s discussion, above, of ‘Socrates is identical’:

The reason why ‘Socrates is identical’ means nothing is that there is no property called ‘identical’. The proposition is nonsensical because we have failed to make an arbitrary determination and not because the symbol, in itself, would be illegitimate. (5.473)

Thus the reason why ‘Socrates is identical’ says nothing is that we have not given *any adjectival* meaning to the word ‘identical’. For when it appears as a sign for identity, it symbolises in an entirely different way – the signifying relation is a different one: the two symbols have only the sign in common, and that is an accident. (5.4733)

We may not, with the sign ‘Socrates is identical’, find an illegitimate symbol containing the symbol ‘identical’ found in the proposition ‘These chairs are identical’. What we may do, however, is find a perfectly legitimate proposition of the form ‘Socrates is dead’. That proposition will, of course, be without content, for we have not assigned an adjectival meaning to the sign ‘identical’ (we have not assigned a meaning to the adjectival symbol ‘identical’), but it will, in itself, be a perfectly good proposition. (Recall that a symbol does not contain its content; see below for the accompanying possibility in Wittgenstein of contentless symbols (for the possibility of form without content).)

Wittgenstein is set, we should see, against a positive conception of nonsense under which because ‘identical’ is a sign for identity, and so has a certain form, there is with ‘Socrates is identical’ an illegitimate symbol, a ‘clash of forms’. What content a word may have in one context does not determine its form in another. Rather, the only nonsense we may find with a symbol is that of *contentlessness*, and this there will be whenever a part of that symbol has not been assigned a content (which it may not have been even if we think it has). We may not find a nonsense of logical illegitimacy resulting from what certain things mean; what we may find, rather, is a perfectly legitimate logical whole being meaninglessness (a proposition being without sense) on account of the failure of one of its parts to have a meaning.

3.14

A second consequence of the idea that it is the proposition which is the unit of syntax is that a sign has meaning only in the context of a proposition. At the top of the section in which is discussed the presentation of expressions by propositional variables Wittgenstein writes:

[O]nly in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning. (3.3)

Recall that ‘name’ is used in the *Tractatus* to mean at times a simple sign, an element of a propositional sign (3.2-3.202, explicitly), and at others a simple symbol, an element of a proposition (4.22, 4.24 explicitly). Here in 3.3 Wittgenstein is talking, as he has just been doing in the passage immediately previous (3.26-3.263), of simple *signs* (of (what figure in a language as) elements of elementary propositional signs). What is said, then, is that only in the context of a proposition does a name-sign have meaning (reference, *Bedeutung*). And of this we are in a position now to give the following account: Propositions are the units of syntax; it is only in the context of the occurrence of a proposition that a symbol – something with a logical form as opposed merely to a mark or sound – may occur. Bearing a logical form, however, is a prerequisite for having meaning: what signifies must share a logical form with what is signified. Thus it is only in the context of the occurrence of a proposition that a sign may have a meaning.

Now this deduction is, I think, both correct and important. That it is only in the context of a proposition that a sign has meaning is an easy consequence of the thesis that the proposition is the unit of syntax (together with the idea that it is syntactic elements which are, in the first instance, meaningful). Still, we can (and should, I think) say more. Leaving it at that would

give the impression that what is commonly called ‘Wittgenstein’s context principle’ is basically a point concerning not meaning but syntax, and that would, I take it, not be quite right. In its entirety, section 3.3 runs:

Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning. (3.3)

Here ‘have sense’ does not mean what it did in the quote: ‘So words have no sense except in propositions’ (LWL p119), what is explicitly explained as meant by *sinnvoll* in Tractatus 3.326, namely ‘have a syntax’. What is meant rather is the more standard ‘represent that something is the case’. This is clear, and so also is that only propositions have sense in this way. Why, then, does Wittgenstein write it, and what connection to what follows after the semi-colon?

Only propositions have sense: it is only with propositions that things are said. What I think we need to see here is that for Wittgenstein *saying something, representing that something is the case*, is (what we might call) *the unit semantic achievement*. Other achievements of meaningfulness (particularly, occasions of reference) take place only in the context of an assertion (a saying, a representing that something is the case). The unit move in the language game, if you like, is *assertion*; there is semantics only within the context of an assertion’s being made.⁵⁶ In saying that only propositions have sense, that only propositions assert things, what Wittgenstein is doing, I think we should thus see, is impressing on us directly and without reference to a syntactic thesis that it is only where there is a proposition that there can be semantics. Hence immediately: it is only in the nexus of a proposition that a name may have meaning.

As the unit of the world is the fact, so the unit of syntax is the proposition, and lining up with these also, I am suggesting, is that the unit semantic achievement is assertion. And it is this last, I think, which deserves the title ‘Wittgenstein’s context principle’.

⁵⁶ Wittgenstein is not directly concerned in the Tractatus with such things as questions, orders etc.. It is unclear how he would tackle those matters.

(We can't here explore in any further detail this 'context principle' of Wittgenstein's,⁵⁷ but what we can quickly say is that it is *not* a consequence of the thesis that the unit of syntax is the proposition. To see this we need only note that that latter thesis does not entail the following consequence of the context principle: that in the proposition 'Socrates is identical' the symbol 'Socrates' is meaningless. The adjectival symbol 'identical' appearing in that proposition does not have a meaning, therefore the proposition 'Socrates is identical' does not say anything and so it follows by the context principle (by the principle that there is reference only within assertion) that 'Socrates' does not there refer either.)

3.15

Towards closing the chapter, let's look head on at the possibility of form without content. Commonly, this is denied. It is, however, central to the work above that it is indeed a genuine possibility. Whilst its form is essential to a symbol, what content a symbol may have is a matter (in part) external to the symbol itself. A symbol is one thing and a meaning another, and the connecting of the two is, Wittgenstein says, an 'arbitrary determination' which can fail to be made (5.473). Let's reinforce this last idea:

If we turn a constituent of a proposition into a variable, there is a class of propositions all of which are values of the resulting variable proposition. In general, this class too will be dependent on the meaning that our arbitrary conventions have given to parts of the original proposition. But if all the signs in it that have arbitrarily determined meanings are turned into variables, we shall still get a class of this kind. This one, however, is not dependent on any convention, but solely on the nature of the proposition. (3.315)

The proposition is supposed to give a logical model of a situation. It can surely only do this, however, because objects have been arbitrarily correlated with its elements. (NB p12)

There must be something in the proposition that is identical with its reference, but the proposition cannot be identical with its reference, and so

⁵⁷ The idea of having sense, its connections to and contrast with that of referring, contains rather immediately the idea of a truth-function (senses have *opposites* (4.0621), and that is off limits for this thesis.

there must be something in it that is *not* identical with the reference. (The proposition is a formation with the logical features of what it represents and with other features besides, but these will be arbitrary and different in different sign languages.) So there must be different formations with the same logical features; what is represented will be one of these, and it will be the business of the representation to distinguish this one from other formations with the same logical features. (Since otherwise the representation would not be unambiguous.) This part of the representation (the assignment of names) must take place by means of arbitrary stipulations. Every proposition must accordingly contain features with arbitrarily determined references. (NB p17)

The reason why ‘Socrates is identical’ means nothing is that there is no property called ‘identical’. The proposition is senseless because we have failed to make an arbitrary determination, and not because the symbol, in itself, would be illegitimate. (5.473)

(The above quotes from the Notebooks here are, it must be mentioned, set in passages questioning the idea that *all* propositions must have features with arbitrarily determined references in the light of the possibility of completely general propositions. This does not affect our point.)

The link between a symbol and its meaning is a matter of ‘arbitrary determination’, ‘arbitrary convention’, ‘arbitrary correlation’, ‘arbitrary stipulation’. More, these ‘conventions’ – Wittgenstein is clear – lie outside the nature of the symbol: the class of propositions determined by turning all constant expressions in a particular proposition into a variable is dependent *not* on any such arbitrary convention, but *rather* on the nature of the proposition with which we started (3.315). More still, it is quite possible for there to be *no* such convention set up with regard to a certain symbol. The (perfectly decent) proposition ‘Socrates is identical’ is senseless *not* because the symbol is itself defective, but *rather* because of failure to make an arbitrary meaning determination for the adjectival symbol ‘identical’ appearing therein (5.473).

So: a symbol does not contain its meaning; a symbol is given a meaning by virtue of an arbitrary convention entirely external to the symbol itself. Such conventions can be used to connect a symbol to any meaning of the same form (to any ‘formation with the same logical features’ as it (NB p17)). And indeed, there may, for a certain symbol, have been no such convention set up; a symbol may be without meaning. Quite possible is that there be form without content.^{58, 59}

3.16

Finally let’s look at what has so far been left to one side: at questions as to the determination of form and content. I asked above where symbols are to be found and answered: within propositions. But where are propositions to be found? And meaningful ones?

Form, I have argued, is a matter of (is determined by) syntactic use. Now we have noted that ‘use’ here means ‘use within a proposition’, but can we say anything more? What is it to use a propositional sign as a proposition? And what about content? We have seen Wittgenstein describing giving meaning to a symbol as making an ‘arbitrary determination’, but what is it to make such a determination?

Taking first the idea of the constitution of (syntactic) use, there is nothing in the text that might even begin to answer the question posed. This might appear a lack, but we should be suspicious for certainly Wittgenstein did not feel it as such (see the TLP preface); we may instead be led to suspect that perhaps the question itself (the question of the constitution of syntactic use) is illegitimate. We can talk, perhaps, of putting together a propositional sign in the context of a certain system; it is not clear to me that anything more substantial should be attempted.

⁵⁸ For further indication of the possibility of contentless (meaningless, senseless) propositions, note 3.13: ‘The content of a proposition’ means the content of a proposition that has sense’, and 4: ‘A thought is a proposition with a sense’.

⁵⁹ We should not confuse this external arbitrariness of content determination with what is arbitrary, inessential, *in* a symbol. In section 3.9 of this chapter above we saw that a symbol has features (particularly, its sign) which are inessential to its representative purpose. These stem from the particulars of the logico-syntactic system in which it lives and are to be contrasted with what is essential to the symbol as a representative, namely its logical form. The arbitrariness of our current focus, however, is an arbitrariness concerning something external to a symbol – its content. It is the arbitrariness of (what is in the Tractatus introduced as) the ‘pictorial relationship’: ‘The pictorial relationship consists of the correlations of the picture’s elements with things’ (2.1514).

With the second question, the question of ‘content determination’, we can perhaps be more indulgent. To end the chapter, I shall present first what I take to be an incorrect response to this question and subsequently the outline of something more faithful to the texts. So: the first response is suggested by 3.11:

We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation.

The method of projection is to think the sense of the proposition.

And 3.5:

A propositional sign, applied and thought out, is a thought.

The method of projecting a particular possible situation is to think of that situation; a propositional sign, if it is to be a thought (a proposition with a sense (4)), needs to be applied (to gain form, to be a proposition) and then ‘thought out’ (to gain content, a sense): The idea is that the symbols I use on a particular occasion are connected with the meanings they then have by some mental act of mine of ‘thinking the sense’ of the proposition in which they figure.

Pursuing this, we need to investigate what, for Wittgenstein, acts of thinking consist in; here we turn to a letter he wrote to Russell in August 1919, in response to some queries Russell had made about the *Tractatus*:

“... But a *Gedanke* is a *Tatsache*: what are its constituents and components, and what is their relation to those of the pictured *Tatsache*?” I don’t know *what* the constituents of a thought are but I know *that* it must have such constituents which correspond to the words of Language. Again the kind of relation of the constituents of the thought and of the pictured fact is irrelevant. It would be a matter of psychology to find out. ...

Does a *Gedanke* consist of words? No! But of psychical constituents that have the same sort of relation to reality as words. What those constituents are I don’t know. (CL p125)

A thought (here a particular mental occurrence rather than a proposition with a sense) is very much like a written or spoken proposition ('thinking is a kind of language, ... a thought ... is just a kind of proposition' (NB p82)) – it is a concatenation of symbols. (A language of thought hypothesis.) But these symbols, rather than having sounds or marks on paper as their signs, are 'psychical'; they have psychic signs. The suggestion, then, is that the elements of an uttered proposition gain their content in virtue of the utterer's (simultaneously?) thinking that content, and to this we add that the utterer's thinking the content consists in the occurrence (in his mind/brain) of a psychical picture. Very good, but the question immediately arises: how do the elements of the psychical picture gain their content?

One answer we clearly can't give here, if we are to make any headway, is that they gain their content in the same way that spoken words gain their content. If the symbols involved in saying that *p* gain their meaning by (the utterer's) thinking that *p*, then the symbols involved in thinking that *p* cannot gain their meaning by (the thinker's) thinking again that *p*. An infinite succession of thinking (trying to think!) the same thought would beckon. But given that Wittgenstein asserts that the psychical constituents do bear the same sort of relation to reality as words (i.e., it seems, that the psychic symbols do gain their content just as written symbols), this first suggestion (of utterance content in virtue of thinking the sense) would seem straightaway to fail.

Perhaps not, though. Let's read the 'sort of relation to reality' which is the same for both words and psychical elements as that relation they both bear merely as symbols, rather than as contentful symbols: both written and psychical symbols share a logical form with (are logically identical to) their meaning. ('A name designating an object thereby stands in a relation to it which is wholly determined by the logical kind of the object and which signalises that logical kind' (NB p70).) Fending off failure in this way, though, is not sufficient for success: still, what fixes the content of the thought? One option here will be to say that *nothing* (else) fixes the content of the thought elements – psychic symbols are such as to pick out their referent purely in virtue of their intrinsic nature. The language of thought differs from other languages in that the meaning of its symbols is internal to them. But such a supposition is deeply inimical to the work of this chapter: it is not left open that certain special symbols contain their meanings. Alternatively, then, it might be suggested that the determination of content of psychic symbols is simply 'a matter of psychology to find out'. Science (and not philosophy/metaphysics or philosophy/logic (= analysis)) will uncover for

us the means by which psychic symbols gain their content; empirical science will uncover for us the constitution of psychic reference. This is what, it seems to me, must (look to) be defended by the Tractarian who holds that (written) propositions gain their content in virtue of an act of thinking.⁶⁰

Gladly, perhaps (given what bad philosophy it is), we can see that this first response to the issue of proposition content determination is actually very difficult convincingly to attribute to Wittgenstein. The primary problem it faces is that the concerns Wittgenstein displays regarding meaning and understanding do not match those a philosopher who went in for the above line ought to display. On the suggested account, meaning is (metaphysically) private and present only in the instant (in the token), and so the issue of how there can be such a thing as a shared language through time stands in need of addressing. But Wittgenstein does not appear troubled in such a way. As regards understanding signs, we are given only:

The meanings of simple signs (words) must be explained to us if we are to understand them. (4.026)

Every sign that has a definition signifies *via* the signs that serve to define it; and the definitions point the way. (3.261)

The meanings of primitive signs can be explained by means of elucidations. Elucidations are propositions that contain the primitive signs. So they can only be understood if the meanings of those signs are already known. (3.263)

⁶⁰ Or is it? There is, perhaps, this further, mystical option: symbols, whether written, spoken or 'psychic', all equally gain their reference through mental acts not of the empirical self (which is studied by psychology) (not through thoughts as spelt out in the letter to Russell), but of the transcendental subject which is 'the limit of the world – not a part of it' (5.641). Hacker writes:

That such configurations, in thought or language, *actually* represent (and do not merely contain the possibility of representing (TLP 3.13)) is a function of the will, of the metaphysical self. ... It is a mental act (albeit of the transcendental self, not of the self that is studied in psychology) that injects meaning or significance into signs. (Hacker 1989 p75)

This carries some attraction in that it presents all representations (in the mind, on paper, in sound etc.) as gaining reference in the same manner, but in the absence of substantial textual support, I am wholly unwilling to see Wittgenstein as involved in such a species of 'philosophy'.

We understand defined signs via their definition, the meanings of simple signs are explained to us by means of elucidations. Now it is far from clear exactly what sort of propositions elucidations are (perhaps they are ostensions of some sort (not ostensive definitions)) (and how Wittgenstein is not saying that we may understand propositions only if we first understand the simple names they contain, and that we may understand names only by understanding propositions in which they occur), but notice that what is at issue here is *the learning of the meanings of sign-types not the understanding (interpretation?) of sign-tokens*. The problem here is: how do we teach someone (the meaning of) a word they do not know?, to which the answer is provided: either by giving a definition (for complex words (for signs of symbols which are not simple names)) or by giving an elucidation (elucidations) (for simple words). There is no solution provided in the Tractatus to a problem of my understanding what someone means (reading/guessing their mind!) when they utter the propositional sign 'The book is red'.

Something else that should occasion the same species of doubt is the talk we have seen of content determination being a matter of (arbitrary) *convention*. Giving a meaning to a symbol is something *we (plural)* do (5.473); the assignment of names to objects, is something conventional that is done by we users of a shared language. We decide, arbitrarily, that a name (something that *recurs*) is to stand for *this* and not *that* object (of the appropriate form). Consider the following remark on completely general propositions:

We can describe the world completely by means of fully generalized propositions, i.e. without first correlating any name with a particular object.

Then, in order to arrive at the customary mode of expression, we simply need to add, after an expression like, 'There is one and only one x such that ...', the words 'and that x is a '. (5.526)

The correlations of names and objects may be set up by, for example, the saying of such things as 'There is one and only one x such that ... and that x is a '. (And of course, such acts may *fail*, even if we think that they have not (5.4733).) With both understanding and meaning, then, Wittgenstein starts from the idea of a language shared over time, and nowhere does the question of how there could be such come into view. What is at issue, rather, with the determination of content, is the (historical) introduction of meaningful symbols into the

shared (English etc.) language.⁶¹ Thus despite an initial attractiveness stemming from a couple of remarks (and just those two (3.11 and 3.5, above)), it does not appear that we should attribute to Wittgenstein the idea that constituents of particular propositions (token symbols) gain their meanings (contents) in virtue of individual (or even several) mental acts. But where then do our explorations leave us?

Well as before with the determination of form the suggestion will be that we should not be frustrated by the absence from the *Tractatus* of any clear solution to a ‘metaphysical problem’ that might be put (that we might think we want to put) with the words: ‘In virtue of what is it true that this physical mark ‘red’ here means what it does? – what injects the meaning here?’. Rather, that absence should provoke the interpretation (again) that there is (at least in Wittgenstein’s mind) no such problem. The ‘arbitrary conventions’ that Wittgenstein calls ‘giving a meaning to a propositional constituent’ have, it has been suggested, to do with the historical genesis, growth and learning of shared languages. What this will amount to is to some extent moot, but the requirement that a *metaphysical* account of content determination be given is, I should suggest, one the Tractarian Wittgenstein would find misguided. This, in a very general way, is the second response.⁶²

⁶¹ See here an early passage from Wittgenstein’s return to philosophy in the late 1920s:

A proposition has sense, it may perhaps be said, if the words in it have meaning.
But how do words come to have meaning?

(i) By definition. E.g. orange = yellowish red. But here we must know what “yellowish” and “red” *mean*.

(ii) By making people understand them, by causing certain processes to take place in people, for example by a drug.

(iii) By ostensive definition. (LWL p23)

⁶² Looking back, we can, I think, sense difficulties arising with Wittgenstein’s insistence in the letter to Russell that thoughts are like written propositions only composed instead of psychic elements. We have argued in this chapter that for a written or spoken sign to be the sign of a particular symbol is for it to be used syntactically in a particular way. How, though, is the notion of syntactic employment going to apply to psychic signs? The problem is that it is not clear what it would be for there to be *rules*, public or private, for the combination of psychic signs, what it would be for there to be a *system* for them. It’s all very well saying that ‘thinking is a kind of language’, but a language has (syntactic) rules for the combinatorial use of its signs – how are we to think of such rules as operative in a world of hidden psychic signs? (Certainly, rules of a type comparable to those of English grammar are not the kind of thing that are going to be stumbled over by a natural scientist; whilst empirical science may find psychic signs (events in the brain, or whatever) it is not, it would seem, going to discover psychic symbols.) More, if there is no question of propositional element content determination – correlation of written symbols with objects – beyond the development and learning of a shared language, does that mean that there is *no* question of the correlation of thought elements with objects? That would clearly be unacceptable. As we have interpreted ‘arbitrary stipulations’, they could have no place with psychic elements (they fit with (potentially) public languages), but one cannot simply insist upon psychic symbols, distinct from their meanings, and then refuse all enquiry of their connection with their meanings.

Appendix to Chapter 3

The realism of the Tractatus

In (early) Frege and Russell are found remarks indicating commitment to the idea that a contentless symbol will be nothing more than a mere sound or mark on a piece of paper:

Nevertheless, there is something to prevent us from regarding (2–3) without more ado as a symbol which solves the problem; for an empty symbol is precisely no solution; without some content it is merely ink or print on paper.
(FA p107)

So long as the names which I use really are names at the moment, i.e. are naming things to me, so long the things must be objects of which I am aware, since otherwise the words would be meaningless sounds, not names of things. (TK p7)

Wittgenstein, by contrast, countenances a level of language at which is found more than mere marks or sounds, but at which content, meaning, is not in view. Or at least so I have argued at length in the chapter above. In this appendix I shall place this point of exegesis alongside an ongoing debate regarding the realism or otherwise of the Tractatus, a debate in which Wittgenstein's use of Frege's context principle is played as of crucial importance. The terms of this debate I shall suggest to be mistaken. Subsequently I shall indicate how one might, alternatively, find the Tractatus to propose a realist metaphysic.

Full engagement on these matters is not possible here. This appendix offers the outline of an approach rather than argumentative detail.

The general point here is not that Wittgenstein necessarily faces insuperable difficulties with mental representations, but rather that there appears to be a need for more to be said. Mental representations are very much not the focus of the Tractatus, and it is not easily apparent how what is said of representation in general, though in the context of physical representations, is to be worked out in the case of the mental.

3a.1

There is a certain traditional, realist interpretation of the Tractatus on which, as Pears puts it, 'language is shaped by the intrinsic nature of the underlying simple objects' (Pears 1987 p13):

Once a name [name sign] has been attached to an object, the nature of the object takes over and controls the logical behaviour of the name, causing it to make sense in some sentential contexts but not in others. (Pears 1987 p88)

This, obviously, I am not going to like. The suggestion is of a sign inheriting its form, its logical behaviour, from its content. A symbol, as I have identified it, would have what is essential to it by virtue of what is inessential to it! Reacting against such traditional 'naming theory' interpretations of the Tractatus for slightly different reasons is, however, a currently more dominant 'use theory' approach. The big stick of this exegetical trend is Wittgenstein's statement at Tractatus 3.3 of a context principle:

To think that one can fix the meanings of names [name signs] ... prior to and independently of their use in propositions; it is just this ... that Frege's and early Wittgenstein's versions of a context principle are concerned to repudiate. (Conant 2000 p210)

It is not, Wittgenstein is read as asserting with his context principle, that the situation represented by a proposition depends upon the objects referred to by the antecedently meaningful signs there in play, but rather that the identity of the object designated by a sign is determined by the role that sign has within propositions. Thus we find such claims as:

The identity of the object referred to is only settled by the use of the name in a set of propositions. ... The problem of the object a name denotes *is* the problem of the use of the name in propositions. (Ishiguro 1969 p21)

The whole point of point of §§3.3-3.344 of the *Tractatus* is that the identity of the object referred to by a name is only fixed by the use of the name in a set of significant propositions. (Conant 2000 p212-213)⁶³

But what idea of ‘use’ is this supposed to be? The notion is not, typically, explored terribly far through the texts. Looking, though, on the ‘use-theorist’s behalf for ideas of ‘use in propositions’ to be found in the *Tractatus* and the Notebooks, the greatly dominant one is that of the syntactic use of signs. The use theorist may thus find himself suggesting that the meaning of a sign, the reality to which it corresponds, may be equated with its logico-syntactic use. McGuinness, for instance talks of:

The misunderstanding of supposing that a name’s [name sign’s] meaning is something other than and prior to its logico-syntactic role. (McGuinness 1981 p10)

But I am going to be little better disposed towards this idea than I was towards the ‘naming theory’. Reference does not collapse into logico-syntactic use. Content does not reduce to form any more than does form follow from content. Neither is it the case that language is shaped through its contact with reality, and nor is it the case that reality is immanent in, connected entirely internally to, signs in syntactic use.

Taking McGuinness as representative of the use theorists – taking the idea of use they offer to be that of ‘syntactic use’ – we can advance the following diagnosis of the debate between them and the naming theorists: that both sides land themselves in trouble by attempting to squeeze the movement from a sign to its meaning into one step when Wittgenstein in fact takes two. Naming theorists take reference to be the one step, and insist then that syntactic use will come there in tow; use theorists take syntactic employment to be the one step, and insist then that reference will come in tow (come therein). I, by contrast, have suggested that syntactic employment is one step, and that there is then the further step of reference. Of course, matters may not be quite so quick: the use theorist may deny that by ‘use’ he means

⁶³ By ‘significant proposition’ here Conant means a proposition which does not belong ‘to a degenerate species (or “limiting case,” c.f. §4.4611) of the genus proposition’ (Conant 2000 p214) – i.e. a proposition which is neither a tautology or a contradiction (4.4611). Whether or not a proposition is a contradiction or a tautology is not, of course, what has been under discussion as its contentfulness in the chapter above.

‘syntactic use’. Rather, however, than exploring the texts on his behalf for possible alternatives (or indeed exploring the secondary literature to piece together a particular author’s alternative), I want instead to suggest that we have already in the chapter above done enough work seriously to challenge the broadest claim of the theorist: the claim that Wittgenstein is not anything we should want to call a metaphysical realist.

3a.2

It will not have gone undetected that despite the firm rejection of any idea of ‘form by virtue of content’, of language’s being shaped by reality, there has been a distinctly realist flavour to the understanding offered in this third chapter of Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language. Signs, I’ve insisted, gain and bear a form independently of any reference they may or may not make to the world. They do this by virtue rather of the role they occupy within a whole calculus of signs, within an entire syntactic system. From here, though, I wrote above:

A mark together with a syntactic use determines a form – determines, that is, a place within a formal structure of combinatorial possibilities. Such a structure is of the ilk of the (formal) system of objects and their combination which is the world. And the point will then be that *language*, or indeed any system within which representation is possible, will instantiate not any such structure but *the structure of reality*. (Section 3.9 above)

I have offered the idea that we may think, generally, of syntactic systems instantiating a variety of structures. Indeed, I have offered a semi-formal model for such talk. If this was not an entirely misguided effort, then, given that a symbol can have as its meaning only those pieces of reality which share its form, the thought becomes hard to avoid that it is required of a syntactic system as a whole, if it is to be such as to allow for its elements to be meaningful, that it be such as to generate not just any forms but rather *logical* forms – those forms, that is, which are found independently in reality. In order for its units to be appropriate for representation, language as a whole, the realistic thought will be, is required to replicate, in its syntax, the logical structure of reality.

In discussion of truth-functionality, Wittgenstein makes the following assertion:

The number of fundamental operations that are necessary depends *solely* on our notation.

All that is required is that we should construct a system of signs with a particular number of dimensions – with a particular mathematical multiplicity. (5.474-5.475)

In order to represent molecular reality we are required to construct a sign system with a particular mathematical multiplicity. In order to represent molecular connections, that is, we must use a system which mirrors (replicates) the truth-functional aspect of reality:

That is to say the common rule that governs the construction of ' $\sim p$ ', ' $\sim\sim p$ ', ' $\sim p \vee \sim p$ ', ' $\sim p \cdot \sim p$ ', etc. etc. (ad inf.). And the common factor mirrors negation. (5.512)

How can logic – all-embracing logic, which mirrors the world – use such peculiar crotchets and contrivances? Only because they are all connected with one another in an infinitely fine network, the great mirror. (5.511)

A molecular syntactic system must have a precise mathematical multiplicity – it must *mirror* the truth functional nature of the world. And a parallel point goes, I want to press, for *atomic* forms. An atomic syntactic system must also, if it is to be a language as opposed to something of merely mathematical interest, have a particular mathematical multiplicity. (Unlike the required molecular multiplicity, however, the required atomic multiplicity is not available *a priori*.) Logical form, we are told in the Tractatus, – the form of *reality* – 'finds reflection in language' (4.121). And in 1930 Wittgenstein writes:

Grammar is a mirror of reality. Grammar enables us to express true and false propositions; and that it does so tells us something about the world. (LWL pp.9-10)

In order that we can represent the world, it must be that the representation and the represented share a logical form (see the next chapter for an explanation of this condition), and for this to be so it must that the representative system as a whole mirror reality. That we find ourselves

able to represent the world in a certain system thus tells us that the world is mirrored in that system – that the formal structure of that system is reality.

The multiplicity of language is given in grammar. A proposition must have the same multiplicity as the fact which it expresses: it must have the same degree of freedom. We must be able to do as much with language as can happen in fact. Grammar lets us do some things with language and not others; it fixes the degree of freedom.

The colour octahedron is used in psychology to represent the scheme of colours. But it is really a part of grammar, not of psychology. It tells us what we can do: we can speak of a greenish bleu but not of a greenish red, etc.

But grammar is not entirely a matter of arbitrary choice. It must enable us to express the multiplicity of facts, give us the same degree of freedom as do the facts. (LWL p8)

Grammar, for the early Wittgenstein, in *non-autonomous*. In order to allow for representation, a sign system must be such as to match the logical forms of reality, it must ‘give us the same degree of freedom as do the facts’. Much of what the later Wittgenstein comes to say of the autonomy of grammar should be understood, I propose, as a reaction to his early, realistic idea of grammar as responsible to reality.

Chapter 4

Unity in thought and the picture theory of meaning

4.1 The correspondence theory of truth

In 1903 Russell held judgment to be a dual relation relating a judging subject to a single object, a proposition, in whose truth or falsity resides the truth or falsity of the judgment. These propositions are worldly rather than linguistic or mental entities: the object of a judgment that Desdemona loves Cassio is a complex composed of Desdemona and Cassio, the people, and love, the relation. A true proposition may thus properly be called a *fact*, and we can describe what Russell offers as an identity theory of truth.

Of the constitution of the truth of a proposition, the following is then claimed:

It is plain that true and false propositions alike are entities of a kind, but that true propositions have a quality which, in a non-psychological sense, may be called being *asserted*. (POM p35)

This distinction of assertedness is intended, somehow, to correspond to the difference between a verbal noun phrase and an assertoric sentence:

Verbs are distinguished by a special kind of connection, exceedingly hard to define, with truth and falsehood, in virtue of which they distinguish an asserted proposition from an unasserted one, e.g. "Caesar died" from "the death of Caesar". (POM p43)

The 'exceedingly hard' matter is not pursued:

The nature of truth, however, belongs no more to the principles of mathematics than to the principles of everything else. I therefore leave this question to the logicians with the above brief indication of a difficulty. (POM p49)

Indeed it soon becomes clear to Russell that no proper pursuit is possible here. By 1906, Russell has seen that from his 1903 theory of judgment *no* account of the difference between truth and falsity is going to be available:

If we accept the view that there are objective falsehoods, we shall oppose them to facts, and make *truth* the quality of facts, *falsehood* the quality of their opposites, which we may call fictions. The facts and fictions together may be called *propositions*. A belief always has a proposition for its object and is knowledge when its object is true, error when its object is false. Truth and falsehood, in this view, are ultimate, and no account can be given of what makes a proposition true or false. (NT p48)

This, naturally, serves to make the position rather unattractive:

This view, though not logically impossible, is unsatisfactory, and we shall do better, if we can, to find some view which leaves the difference between truth and falsehood less of a mystery. (NTF p152)

But what alternative? Well, let's ask: what kind of thing was Russell trying for with his talk of a distinction between 'logically unasserted' and 'logically asserted' propositions? The matter, we saw, was to have to do with a distinction between a verbal noun phrase and an assertoric sentence/proposition. And of that, Russell wrote (in the same chapter of the *Principles*):

Every verb, in the logical sense of the word, may be regarded as a relation; when it occurs as verb, it actually relates, but when it occurs as verbal noun it is the bare relation considered independently of the terms which it relates. ... Owing to the way in which the verb actually relates the terms of a proposition, every proposition has a unity which renders it distinct from the sum of its constituents. (POM p52)

So what Russell appears (at least) to have wanted to suggest with his idea that false propositions are logically unasserted – his idea that in false propositions the verb appears as

verbal noun (POM p43 above) – is that false propositions do not in fact have a unity rendering them distinct from the sum of their constituents. There are no false propositions (no unified wholes which are fictions): there is, in the case of falsity, only the sum of what in the case of truth are unified into complex wholes. The falsity of a proposition consists in its non-existence as a unity! Of course, Russell does not actually say this (quite the opposite – he says that *all* propositions have a unity rendering them distinct from the sum of their constituents) – but he does *almost* say it. What he wants to say about the distinction between truth and falsity leads him right up to the assertion that the falsity of a judgment consists in the non-existence of its object, in there being no one unified entity composed of those things which would compose that unity which is its object in the case of truth.

This instinct, kept in check for obvious reasons in 1903, that the distinction between truth and falsity is a matter of existence and non-existence, is by 1910 explicitly recognised:

We feel that when we judge truly some entity ‘corresponding’ in some way to our judgment is to be found outside our judgment, while when we judge falsely there is no such ‘corresponding’ entity. ... [T]he truth or falsehood of a judgment depends upon the presence or absence of a ‘corresponding’ entity of some sort. (NTF p152)

And it is, these seven years on, now fully embraced:

If A loves B, there is a such a complex object as ‘A’s love for B’, and vice versa; thus the existence of this complex object gives the condition for the truth of the judgment ‘A loves B’. (NTF p157)

The thought is attractive enough: a judgment that p is true not when a certain worldly entity has the brute property of being a fact rather than a fiction, but rather when a certain worldly entity – the fact that p – *exists*. That entity which is my judgment that p is true just in case there exists in the world a different, corresponding entity: the fact that p.

This is the formula for a *correspondence theory of truth*, and Russell’s adoption of it (and rejection of his earlier identity theory) was of the greatest significance both for his own philosophy and also for Wittgenstein’s. The idea was perhaps Wittgenstein’s most important

inheritance from Russell, and was not finally abandoned by him until 1930-31. Russell's problem from 1910 was to say what a judgment is, and what a fact, such that a judgment and a fact may be seen to correspond to each other in a philosophically satisfactory manner. Wittgenstein, I suggest, felt Russell to have failed in his attempts to achieve this and offered his picture theory of meaning as the proper solution.

Before exploring this story, though, we should make the observation that one can be a correspondence theorist without insisting that the correspondence formula applies (directly) to *all* judgments. Indeed, to restrict its scope is probably desirable: the correspondence idea is immediately applicable, one will probably think, only to elementary judgments. A judgment (thought, proposition, belief) that p and q is not (perhaps) made true by the existence of a corresponding entity, the conjunctive fact that p and q , but rather by the existence of two entities, the fact that p and the fact that q . A judgment that not- p is made true not (perhaps) by the existence of the negative fact that not- p , but rather by the non-existence of the fact that p . A judgment that $(x)fx$ is made true not (perhaps) by the existence of the universal fact that $(x)fx$, but rather by the existence of all facts of the form fx . This noted, our focus has been and will continue to be on elementary judgments; the matter of how (Russell and) Wittgenstein dealt (or anticipated dealing) with the non-elementary is a matter we must set to one side. What we should notice and hold to here, however, is the distinction between allowing non-elementary facts (negative facts, say) and allowing facts to be true or false. The former amounts (in Russell) to a wide application of the correspondence idea (an application which goes beyond, one might feel, the domain of its intuitive appeal); the latter would amount (in Russell) to a return to the identity theory of truth (and is something Russell repeatedly warns against in the post 1910 writings (see, e.g., PLA p184)). The falsity of an elementary judgment consists not in the *falsity* of its object, but in the *absence from the world* of its object(ive). That is the key idea of the correspondence theory that held both Russell and Wittgenstein enthralled for so long.

4.2 Russell, logical nonsense and unity in thought (Chapter 1 revisited)

With his adoption of the correspondence theory of truth, Russell could no longer hold his dual relation theory of judgment. 'A relation cannot be a relation to nothing' (NT p152), and so the possible non-existence of the judgment's objective (the possible falsity of the

judgment) must mean that a judgment does not have its objective, the fact, as relatum. Instead, Russell proposes, the judgment will have as multiple relata the several components of its objective; a judgment is a multiple relation from the subject to the several constituents of that fact whose existence as a unified whole constitutes the judgment's truth. A thought, the idea is, may not deliver its objective simply as *that*, for there may be no *that* so to deliver. What will be there to be delivered simply as *those*, rather, are the components of the objective. A thought, it would therefore seem, must deliver its objective indirectly (in a certain sense) by delivering directly the components of its objective.

Confronting this idea, however, is a certain problem of determination: it may be that two different complexes are constructible from the same components, and so that the deliverance by a thought of a variety of components is insufficient to determine a unique objective. (The components A, B and love, say.) The identity of a complex may not be fixed merely by enumerating its component entities. A thought (some thoughts, at least) must therefore do more than merely provide components. – But what?

Russell makes, we examined, two responses to this difficulty.⁶⁴ First, in *On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood*, it is suggested that the subordinate relation of a judgment has a sense which sorts the matter out: the objective is that complex in which the object relation relates the object terms with the same sense it has in the judgment. Subsequently, on finding the idea of the object relation's having a sense unacceptable (incoherent), it is suggested in *The Problems of Philosophy* that the object terms are to appear in the same order in the judgment and the objective. In a judgment the constituents of the objective are given in a certain order; the objective is then to be understood as that complex in which certain of the given constituents, the object terms, appear as terms of the remaining constituent, the object relation, in the same order as they appear in the judgment.

What Russell is after here, in these attempts to define the correspondence relation between a judgment and its objective, is a strict algorithm for getting from the former to the latter: the objective must be a function of the judgment. It must be determinate, of any judgment, what it is a judgment of. And in *The Problems of Philosophy*, the attempt promises to be

⁶⁴ He makes a third in *Theory of Knowledge* which we did not investigate: our attention by that time had moved on. This was to claim that we only ever make elementary judgments whose objective *is* uniquely fixed by its components. So, for instance, we may judge that A is next to B but we may not judge (not directly) that A loves B. See TK part II chapter V.

successful. To fulfil this promise we need only to say something like: In a judgment, the judging relation has a sense, and this orders the judgments objects as (say): subject, object relation, object term 1, ..., object term n. We could, that is, define a judgment's objective as that fact in which the second term of the judgment relates the terms which follow it (the third, fourth etc. terms) in the same order as they appear in the judgment. And we would have, at that stage, an understanding of judgment, and a definition of the correspondence relation, such that any judgment corresponds to at most one possible fact.

Wittgenstein, however, is not happy. Famously, and as we have seen, he makes the criticism of Russell's theories of judgment that they allow for judgments of logical nonsense. He observes, that is to say, that whilst Russell can (or at least promises to be able to) ensure that a judgment corresponds to at most one possible fact, he cannot guarantee that corresponding to a judgment is at least one possible fact. Russell's definitions of judgment and correspondence cannot rule out judgments to which *no* possible fact corresponds – judgments, that is, whose object picked out (somehow) as the object relation is not in fact a relation of the correct order to relate those objects picked out (somehow) as the object terms.

This upsets Russell, and not merely because he does not want to countenance such 'judgments' (such complexes) as 'a judgment that Jack Jill/that Jack Jills'. That is a bullet one could (perhaps rather uncharitably) imagine him biting if he had to. What is more devastating for Russell is the basis of Wittgenstein's complaint: Russell has no right logically to prohibit the replacement in a complex of an entity appearing there in a certain (basic) way with any other entity capable of appearing in complexes in that way. Particularly, he cannot prohibit the replacement of what is occurring as a term in a complex with any other term (universal or particular). The recognition of this entails the abandonment of much of Russell's 1913 theorising about complexes.

Wittgenstein's purpose in making his point was not, however, to object to Russell's theories of complexes. That he could have done directly (if he had been aware of them, which he probably was not (not of the objectionable, 1913 developments, that is)). But nor was it merely to insist that there can be no such thing as an illogical thought, that a theory of judgment must not allow such things as 'a judgment that Jack Jill(s)'. The impossibility of illogical thought is, we have seen, something of the greatest importance to him, but his concern in criticising Russell stretches beyond that. It would not in itself have sufficed for

Wittgenstein if Russell could have defined what a judgment is, and what correspondence is, such that to every logically possible judgment there corresponds exactly one logically possible fact. For left unmet might still have been the requirement of unity in thought. And it was, primarily, to show Russell that he had not met this requirement that Wittgenstein made his criticism.

The idea here is quite simple: The requirement on unity in thought is the requirement on theories of judgment that a belief present the components of its objective *as* combined together, *as* the components they are of that objective. Russell's permission of judgments the several objects of which are logically uncombinable, placed alongside the insistence that an entity's presentation in thought as a component of a certain sort cannot go against the intrinsic logical nature of that entity (that there is no such thing as, e.g., presenting Jill, the girl, as a predicate), makes transparent that this is a requirement his theory has not met.

4.3 Wittgenstein's picture theory of judgment (1)

From Russell, Wittgenstein inherited (I have suggested) the correspondence theory of truth. The truth or falsity of an elementary truth-bearer consists in the presence in or absence from the world of a corresponding elementary truth-maker. More, we have seen in chapter 2 above a strong similarity of conception between Russell and Wittgenstein of the elementary truth-makers, of the atomic facts: they are complexes of objects. There is, however, a significant divergence over the nature of the truth-bearers. Wittgenstein's truth-bearers are propositions or (less frequently) thoughts, and these look very different from Russellian judgments. This should not, however, throw us from the idea that Wittgenstein's theory of truth is, importantly, a descendent of Russell's. Indeed, I shall suggest below that certain key aspects of Wittgenstein's divergence from Russell on the matter of truth-bearers are prompted by an impossibility felt by Wittgenstein of finding a satisfactory correspondence situation between the Russellian truth-bearers and complexes of objects.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ I do not mean, of course, to suggest that the shift from Russellian judgments to Tractarian propositions is motivated solely by concerns with Russell's theory of truth. Wittgenstein's focus on the linguistic as opposed to the mental has roots in Frege (and, no doubt, elsewhere) which cannot be explored in this thesis.

Famously, Wittgenstein called his truth bearers – propositions or thoughts – *pictures* of the facts to which they correspond. In this section I want to suggest that the point of this appellation is twofold: first to emphasise a certain similarity of achievement between a proposition/thought and a picture, and second to suggest a similarity also in the means of the similar achievement.

Consider together the following two remarks:

The proposition must enable us to see the logical structure of the situation that makes it true or false. (As a picture must shew the spatial relation in which the things represented in it must stand if the picture is correct (true).)
(NB p15)

A proposition *shows* how things stand, *if* it is true. (4.022)

A (traditionally painted) picture of, say, people in a room, would appear to bear the following phenomenon: that from the picture itself we can immediately read off how the people represented therein are to be located vis-à-vis each other if the picture is correct. We can immediately read off, say, that a certain person is to be to the left of another and in front of a third. David's 1808 'Consecration of Napoleon I' *shows* us, *displays* to us, how the people represented by the various figures stood on that occasion if the picture is accurate. Whilst we may need a key to tell us who is represented by the various figures in the painting (and very often we find just such keys in art galleries), what we do *not* need (and will not find) is a further key to tell us how the represented people are to be spatially interrelated if the picture is to be correct (accurate) – that is shown in/by the picture itself. (Of course, we (and indeed the painter) may not be interested in the picture's accuracy, but that is beside the current point.)

Now this thought about pictures is, and is supposed to be, a naïve observation, but it is in just this naïve observation that we can find, I suggest, a core purpose of the picture analogy of the *Tractatus*. As a picture shows the spatial relation of the things represented in it if it is true, so a proposition, Wittgenstein thinks, shows the logical relation of the things represented in it if it is true: 'the proposition must enable us to *see* the logical structure of the situation that makes it true or false' (NB p15 above, my italics) (compare: the picture enables us to *see* the

spatial structure of the situation it represents). We may need a key to determine what is represented by the various representatives (names) in the proposition, but we do *not* need, Wittgenstein thinks, a further key to tell us how the represented objects are to stand with each other if the proposition is to be true – we read that straight off from the proposition-picture itself. The proposition by itself *shows* us, *displays* to us, how those things stand if it is true.

Of understanding a proposition, Wittgenstein writes:

To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true.

(One can understand it, therefore, without knowing whether it is true.)

It is understood by anyone who understands its constituents [*Bestandteile*] . (4.024)

Combine this with:

An elementary proposition consists [*besteht*] of names. (4.22)

and

A name means an object. The object is its meaning. (3.203)

and the idea is apparent: In order to understand a proposition, all that is needed is to know what objects are represented by the names of which it is composed; what the proposition then *says* about those objects, about how they stand in the world, is *immediately visible* in the proposition itself: ‘In this way the proposition represents the situation – as it were off its own bat’ (NB p 26). Off its own bat, a picture in a gallery shows us how the people represented therein are to relate spatially if the picture is correct, and off its own bat, Wittgenstein thinks, a proposition must show us how the objects represented therein are to relate (be connected) logically if it is true.

This idea suggested, what we must notice now, if we have not already, is that this immediate visibility in a proposition of how things stand if it is true *is the concern precisely of unity in language* – it is the correlate concern in language of our concern above of unity in thought. The requirement of unity in thought/language is the requirement that a thought/proposition yield the components of its objective as the components they are of that unity, and what that

means is that we must be able to read straight off from the proposition how the entities there presented are unified in the objective (are unified in reality if the proposition is true).

A picture of people in a room shows us how the people represented within it are to be related spatially if it is correct; the picture, in itself, shows us those people so related, it presents those people *as* so related. If a picture presents us with people as spatially related to each other, then it will show us a spatial relation of people, and that spatial relation of people will be precisely that in which the people there represented must stand if the picture is correct. Conversely, if a picture shows us how the people represented within it must stand spatially if it is correct, then it will show us a spatial relation of people, and to do that will be to show us people *in* spatial relation with each other, it will be to present the represented people *as* spatially related. Parallel lines can be worked for propositions: For a proposition to present objects as connected together in that way which constitutes its objective is for it to show us how those objects stand (are connected) in its objective (how those objects stand if the proposition is true). And conversely, if a proposition shows us how things are connected if it is true, then it will show us a logical connection of things, and this will mean showing those things *in* connection with each other, it will mean presenting those objects *as* connected together.

For a proposition to display to us 'off its own bat' how the things represented within it stand together in its objective (stand together in reality if it is true), is precisely, we should see, for it to present those things *as* so standing, is for it to present them *as* the components they are of the unity which is the proposition's objective. A key point of Wittgenstein's calling propositions pictures was, I thus suggest, to emphasise their achievement of yielding the components of their objectives *as* the components they are of those facts (the achievement of unity in thought/language). More, though, Wittgenstein thought that the *means* by which a proposition presents the components of its objective as logically related can usefully be compared to the means by which a picture may present people as spatially related.

An obvious, naïve construal of a simple picture of people in a room would be this: that the picture represents two people as next each other in the room, it shows them next to each other, first by having two figures in the picture represent (stand for) two different people, and second by having those two figures located next to each other in the picture. More generally, one might suggest, the picture shows people related spatially together in a room by having

figures representing those people related *in the same way* in the picture. Now this naïve idea will not actually, of course, carry us terribly far in the understanding of pictures of people in rooms – one person is not represented as being behind another by having its representing figure behind that of the other in the picture (not in a standard, two-dimensional picture, anyway) – but Wittgenstein's thought is that it is exactly thus that propositions come to represent the components of their objectives *as* logically related (combined): a proposition shows the components of its objective as combined logically in a certain way by having elements representing (standing for) those components combined *in just that same way* in the proposition.

So the logical structure of a situation is mirrored in a proposition – the proposition *shows* it. (PTLP 4.10221)

This is hugely important; let's approach the matter from another angle, looking back (again) at Russell.

4.4 Wittgenstein's picture theory of judgment (2)

We have seen that unity in thought entails, on pain of denying what is not to be denied (that something cannot be presented in thought in a manner misaligned with its intrinsic logical nature), the impossibility of thoughts of logical nonsense (the impossibility of thoughts which present logically unsynthesisable entities for the components of their objectives). The entailment does not, however, go so obviously the other way. I suggested above that Wittgenstein might not be satisfied by a theory of judgment on which there is a complete (and not merely partial) function from possible judgments to possible facts as the requirement of unity might still not be met. That this is indeed so is visible in Russell's final, 1918 theory of judgment.

Responding to Wittgenstein's criticism of his earlier theory, Russell asserted in his 1918 lectures on the Philosophy of Logical Atomism that in the complex 'Othello believes Desdemona loves Cassio' 'you have to have a verb where 'loves' occurs' (PLA p225). Not to insist upon that is to allow for judgments of logical nonsense. And in order to be able to make such an insistence, it must be, Russell adds, that 'love' occurs in that complex not as a

term (for then it could be replaced by any other term), but rather in a manner proper to verbs. On pain of the impossibility of falsity, this verbal manner cannot, however, be that of a relating relation. Thus we have on our hands an entirely new mode of occurrence in complexes.

Now from this new (projected) position, Russell can indeed claim to have ruled out judgments of logical nonsense (the occurrence of the subordinate relation is now *verbal*, is an occurrence proper only to *verbs*), but can he claim to have met the requirement of unity in thought? We should think not. Certainly, in 'Othello believes Desdemona loves Cassio', Desdemona, love and Cassio are no longer merely listed as terms of the belief relating relation – rather the three are connected together somehow within that complex by the verbal behaviour there of love. Love, in that complex, is in some way to go between Desdemona and Cassio, is to be responsible for a unity of some sort there of the three. But look: that unity within a belief in which we are now to find the components of its objective is precisely *not*, on pain for Russell of the impossibility of falsity, the same unity that those components have in the objective itself. And if that is so, the requirement of unity in thought will not after all be met, for that requirement is the requirement not that a thought present the components of its objective merely as united in *some* way, but rather that it present those components as united in precisely that way which constitutes its objective.

(Any reply to this proposing that to unite objects in a certain 'in thought' way is, precisely, to present them as united in a different 'in reality' way would be entirely mysterious. It can hardly count as putting forward a *theory* of mental representation to say that what it is for certain entities to be represented in thought as combined in a certain way is for them to be combined in the thought in a different, but primitively connected way (and the connection would have to be primitive; the presentation as combined is to be a matter internal to the thought). (Russell never seems fully to realise that this is what his multiple relation theory of judgment must be: a theory of (mental) representation.) If the objects of a Russellian thought are synthesised there in a certain way, then we can responsibly claim them to be presented there as synthesised only in that same way.)

With this criticism, however, we may begin to feel a little sorry for Russell. It seems that we are not going to be satisfied with any development of his theories other than precisely that which he is forbidden from making: that in his judgments the components of the objective are

combined into that very unity which is the objective (are combined *in the very same way* as they are in the objective). Anything less than that would appear bound to fall foul of the requirement of unity in thought, but if that idea is embraced then, holding to the correspondence theory of truth, the possibility of falsity will be foreclosed. There is, it would seem, no way out for him.

This appearance is, I think, correct: an important break from Russell is indeed necessary if we are to exit the dilemma in which he is placed. More, we can see, perhaps, where that break will have to come. Russellian thoughts present the components of their objectives through actually containing those components, and from there the problem is this: that whatever entities a complex presents through their containment could not be presented as unified in a certain way unless they are in fact unified there in just that way. Unable happily to deny this last, the way out, it would therefore seem, must be to suggest that those complexes which are bearers of truth or falsity (judgments, thoughts, propositions) do not, as for Russell, present the components of the complexes to which they correspond through actually *containing* those components; rather, we might think to suggest, they present their objective's components through containing things which *represent*, which *stand for*, those components.

On Christmas Day 1914 Wittgenstein wrote:

The possibility of the proposition is, of course, founded on the principle of signs as GOING PROXY for objects.

Thus in the proposition something has *something else* as its proxy. (NB p37, first sentence repeated at TLP 4.0312)

This, then, is the first part of the picture theory of judgment: in a truth-bearer things go proxy for the elements of the represented complex (the elements of the truth-maker).

The second part is that *all* the elements of a truth-bearer are proxies for things other than themselves:

In a picture the elements of the picture are the representatives of objects.
(2.131)

This displaces from the scene both the Russellian judgment relation and the Russellian judging subject. Russell's (primary) truth bearers had as elements a judging relation, a judging subject and the several components of the judged objective; Wittgenstein's are composed only of representatives of the several components of the judged objective. This deletion is of course of great importance in itself (see 5.541-5.5421), but our interest lies rather in its effect of allowing, whilst still respecting the restriction of 5.54 that 'in the general propositional form propositions occur in other propositions only as bases of truth-operations', for the third and final part of the picture theory:

The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way. (2.15)

In a thought/proposition ('A proposition is a picture of reality' (4.01)) the representatives of things are connected *in the very same way* as are those things they represent in that thought/proposition's objective (the represented fact, the truth-maker).

And the identity of manners of combination proposed here is, we should now fully sense, absolutely crucial: it is thus that Wittgenstein meets the requirement of unity in thought. A Wittgensteinian thought presents the components of its objective *as* the components they are of that unity by having their representatives be just such components of *just such* a unity. A thought gives the components of its objective as in logical position vis-à-vis each other by having their representatives adopt just that same logical positioning vis-à-vis each other. Anything less than an *identity* of modes of logical combination would destroy the whole point of the theory: it would no longer be internal to the proposition that the components of its objective are presented *as* components of that fact; the requirement of unity would not be met. (That, from a certain angle, is the criticism of Russell's 1918 theory.) If Wittgenstein were to hold to Russell's subject-predicate form, then he would suggest that a thought that A is red presents A and redness combined as subject and predicate by combining as subject and predicate representatives of A and redness respectively.

Recurrent in Wittgenstein's discussion of propositions is the idea of a *model*:

A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it. (4.01)

In a proposition a situation is, as it were, constructed by way of experiment. (4.031)

In a proposition a world is as it were put together experimentally. (NB p7)

And the idea is just this: that a proposition and its objective are 'constructed according to a common logical pattern' (4.014). In a proposition we put together the representatives of things in just that same way as the proposition represents those things as put together in reality: we make a model of the world as we imagine it to be. It is in doing this that things are represented (shown) not separately from each other but rather *as* put together in reality; it is in being a logical model of reality, in being a logical structure of the very same sort as reality, that a thought/proposition shows us how things stand if it is true.⁶⁶

this To conclude the last two sections: A central ambition of Wittgenstein is to produce a theory of thought/language on which thoughts/propositions achieve something comparable to an achievement of pictures. As a picture may show things as spatially interrelated, Wittgenstein thinks, so thoughts/propositions show things as logically interrelated (combined). This (mooted) phenomenon of thoughts/propositions is the phenomenon, precisely, of unity in thought/language; the ambition to respect it is the ambition to meet the requirement of unity in thought/language. More, Wittgenstein develops a theory under which the picture-like achievement of propositions is effected through their being themselves somewhat picture-like: as a picture (we may naturally, naively propose) shows things as spatially interrelated in a certain way through the interrelation in that same way within it of representatives of those things, a proposition or thought, Wittgenstein contends, shows objects as logically combined through the combination in that very same way of representatives of those objects.

⁶⁶ As a model in a courtroom may show things as spatially interrelated, Wittgenstein thinks, so thoughts/propositions show things as logically interrelated (combined) – here we can find sense of Wittgenstein's repeated assertion that we *compare* a proposition with reality (2.223, 3.05, 4.05). We *confront* the proposition directly with reality, to see whether or not things stand in reality as the proposition *shows* them as standing.

4.5 Not stopping with what we mean short of the fact

In the introduction to this thesis I gave a reading of sections 92-96 of the *Philosophical Investigations* in which Wittgenstein retrospectively attributes to his earlier self the line that in order that we not stop with what we mean short of a fact – in order that this be so whilst still allowing for the fact's possible non-existence – what a thought/proposition must be is a 'picture of reality'. This idea of 'not stopping short' I linked briefly to Russell and issues of unity; we can close the thesis with a second exploration.

To begin I should say that I am unhappy with certain important details of Anscombe's translation of *Philosophical Investigations* 95. I cite below her translation, then the German original, and a translation with certain adjustments made:

95. "Thought must be something unique". When we say, and *mean*, that such-and-such is the case, we – and our meaning – do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: *this—is—so*. But this paradox (which has the form of a truism) can also be expressed in this way: *Thought* can be of what is *not* the case.

95. "Denken muß etwas Einzigartiges sein." Wenn wir sagen, *meinen*, daß es sich so und so verhält, so halten wir mit dem, was wir meinen, nicht irgendwo vor der Tatsache: sondern meinen, daß *das und das—so und so—ist*. – Man kann aber dieses Paradox (welches ja die Form einer Selbstverständlichkeit hat) auch so ausdrücken: Man kann *denken*, was nicht der Fall ist.

95. "Thought must be something unique". When we say, *mean*, that something is the case, we do not stop with what we mean anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: *such and such—is—thus and so*. But this paradox (which has the form of a truism) can also be expressed in this way: we can *think* what is not the case.

There are two important points at which I want to question Anscombe's translation. The lesser of these is her writing, in the section's second sentence, '*this—is—so*' as opposed to

‘*such and such—is—thus and so*’ as a translation of ‘*das und das—so und so—ist*’. So to do, I think, makes it less clear (perhaps even unclear) that an instantiation of the formula would be ‘*A—is—red*’ and not ‘*A’s being red—is—so*’ (not: ‘*p—is—true*’). ‘... ist so und so’ does not mean ‘... is the case’. Of greatest importance for me, though, is the translation of ‘wir halten mit dem, was wir meinen, nicht irgendwo vor der Tatsache’. For Anscombe to put: ‘we – and our meaning – do not stop anywhere short of the fact’ seems to me to be too free to the point of simple incorrectness.

To begin, whence Anscombe’s ‘and’? The preposition in German is ‘mit’ not ‘und’. It must be that Anscombe is going for the ‘along with’/‘considered together with’ sense of ‘with/mit’ here – the sense which might be portrayed equally by ‘and’. But that taken, we will do well to ask what it is that ‘we’ are being considered together with in Wittgenstein’s sentence. Anscombe writes: ‘our meaning’, and this, I think, is highly misleading – at best. To put ‘our meaning’ rather than ‘that which we mean’ (or ‘what we mean’) as a translation for ‘was wir meinen’ invites the interpretation ‘our *act* of meaning’, and that would be incorrect. Worse for Anscombe, her English sentence is such that within it the interpretation of ‘our meaning’ as ‘our act of meaning’ is the *natural* interpretation. Where acts move, things stand still: we can begin to see sense in a person considered with an act of meaning not stopping short of a fact, but what can be done with the idea of a person and a thing meant not stopping short of a fact? Things taken together don’t move (any more than do things taken singularly), and so they don’t stop either. And with this point a question mark is pushed back onto Anscombe’s use of ‘and’ rather than ‘with’. With the insistence, clear from the German, that it is thing meant and not act of meaning at issue here, we will struggle, I think, to find a translation using ‘and’ rather than ‘with’ as a translation of Wittgenstein’s ‘mit’. But there’s no need to be struggling at all with this sentence! It’s not as if a close translation is unavailable. Indeed, just this is the important point: that (what appears to me) a highly literal translation is open to us here, and should be embraced. ‘mit dem, was wir meinen’ translates quite simply not to ‘– and our meaning –’ but to ‘with that which we mean’. I shall work from here, as I did in the introduction, with this latter translation.

When we mean that something is the case, then we do not stop with what we mean anywhere short of the fact; we mean, for instance: *A—is—red*.

On its face, this is, I take it, a most enigmatic pronouncement. Looking to understand it, an obvious hope given its location in a passage of the *Investigations* in which Wittgenstein is considering his earlier work will be to find for it some kind of pre-1929 historical context. This I can do: the background here, I suggest, is of Russell's theory of judgment and the issue of unity in thought. Of course, I don't pretend that a 'deductive exegetical case' can be constructed from this one sentence of the *Investigations* through to Wittgenstein's criticism of Russell – the text and its surroundings are simply far too thin. What case of that sort can be constructed, however, is for the claim that what Wittgenstein is doing at this point in the *Investigations* is 'outlining' (what he recalls as) a central motivation for his Tractarian idea of propositions/thoughts as pictures of the world. This I did in the introduction to this thesis (section 0.1). More, I have through this thesis offered the narrative that a key context of Wittgenstein's picture theory is Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment, that Wittgenstein was deeply concerned with the multiple relation theory that it did not meet a requirement of unity in thought, and that the need to meet this requirement was in turn an important motivation for his own picture theory. What I can do now, then, is put the pieces together and show how the narrative can be used to make good sense of what is otherwise a rather (if not entirely) baffling section of the *Investigations*.

We do not stop with what we think/mean/say/believe (etc.) anywhere short of the fact. – What might this mean? What would it be to 'stop short of the fact' in this way? Well, consider again (for the last time) Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment: A multiple relation thought presents its several objects. So far so good. But how, we might then ask, do we get from these to the thought's objective? Well, here is where Russell's definitions of correspondence step up. In *The Problems of Philosophy* the reply might be this: the objective is that fact in which the first-given object relates the subsequent objects in the same order in which they are given in the thought. In *Theory of Knowledge* the reply is this: the objective is that fact whose constituents are the given objects. Either way, however, we should see that we stand in need here of instruction. Even if its answer is straightforward, or indeed obvious (as Russell might suggest it is in *Theory of Knowledge*), there is still a question as to how we get from what we are presented with in the thought to the fact whose existence makes that thought true. We must, from what is presented by the thought, take a *further step*, a step *external to the thought itself*, in order to arrive at the fact. And what this means, I propose, is that Russell has us stop short of the fact with what we think.

Of course, this rides upon Russellian facts/objectives not being what his thoughts do, in themselves, present us with – on their not being, that is, mere collections of entities. And so they are not: a fact is not a collection but a *unity* of objects. In order, then, for us *not* to stop short of the fact with what we think, Russell – and indeed any theorist who conceives of facts as combinations of things – must have that what his thoughts present, directly, are not collections of objects but *unities* of objects. Explaining what he means in section 95 of the *Investigations* by ‘we do not stop with what we mean anywhere short of the fact’, Wittgenstein offers: ‘we mean: *such and such—is—thus and so*’. Why, we may well ask, these rather odd hyphens? Well their point, I take it, is this: we don’t, when we think (for example) that A is red mean the pair A and redness, or the list A then redness (we don’t stop *there* with what we mean): we mean, rather: *A—is—red*, we mean A and redness *combined together*. What we mean is a *combination* of A and redness, and what the hyphens do here is illustrate that togetherness: their point is to give an idea, on the page, of things *connected together* (there are, on the page, lines connecting not spaces separating).

With the idea of a fact as a unity of objects, the requirement that we not stop short of the fact with what we mean becomes the requirement of unity in thought. In order that there not be a further step from what a thought (directly) presents (from what we think/mean) to the fact, it must be that a thought present (not a series of individual objects but rather) objects *combined together*. A thought must present the components of its objective not individually and apart from each other but rather as they components they are of that fact.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ I should counter explicitly a certain alternative reading I have heard given of PI 95. First, and with Anscombe’s help, the assertion that ‘when we say, *mean*, that something is the case, we do not stop with what we mean anywhere short of the fact’ is (mis)read as the assertion that a proposition/thought itself does not stop anywhere short of the fact. This latter is then taken to mean that the identity of its objective (what it means) is a matter internal (and presumably essential) to the proposition/thought. The connection between a thought (or proposition) and its meaning (sense) is wholly internal.

Obviously, I am not going to like such a suggestion: a central point of the last chapter was that the dominant notion of a proposition in the *Tractatus* is of something which is, in important part, only externally related to its sense (the fact it represents). Whilst Wittgenstein does, in his middle period, make such remarks as:

Ogden & Richards and Russell consider that the relation of proposition to fact is an external relation; this is not correct. It is an internal relation. (An internal relation cannot be otherwise; it is given in the terms involved, in the nature of proposition and fact.) (LWL p9)

this is, I would press, a development of, a movement away from, his earlier position on which a proposition contains the form but not the content of the fact it represents (3.13). (The development represents, in effect, a collapsing together of form and content.) In the 1930 *Philosophical Remarks* we find first:

If I wish that *p* were the case, then of course *p* is not the case and there must be a surrogate for *p* in the state of wishing (PR p66)

Reading sections 92-96 of the Investigations, I wrote in the introduction to this thesis:

Thus it is suggested: in our not stopping anywhere short of the fact with what we mean (with what we think/say/believe etc.) it must be, the early Wittgenstein thinks, that a thought/proposition achieve something unique. And to accomplish this unique feat, Wittgenstein then considers, what a thought/proposition must be is a 'unique correlate, picture of reality' (PI 96). To try to understand this is the major task of the work to come. (Section 0.1)

The understanding on offer should now be apparent. Not to stop anywhere short of the fact with what we think is, given the Russellian-Wittgensteinian conception of facts as unities of objects, for a thought/proposition to present the components of its objective *as* the components they are of that objective. And to do *that*, Wittgenstein believed, what a thought/proposition must be is a picture of reality. A proposition/thought must present the components of its objective *as* combined together in that way which constitutes the objective's existence, and for this it must be that the constituents of a proposition/thought stand for those components and are there combined together in just that same way as are the components they stand for in the objective.

If I understand an order but do not carry it out, then understanding it can only consist in a process which is a *surrogate* for its execution, and so in a *different* process from its execution (PR p67)

And then:

I should like to say, assuming the surrogate process to be a picture doesn't get me anywhere, since even that does not do away with the transition from the picture to what is depicted. (PR p67)

Wittgenstein is here retracting his picture theory in which there *was* a transition (that of the external, content fixing, relations of reference) from the wish to its fulfilment (the thought to the fact it represents).

In *Some Remarks on Logical Form*, Wittgenstein explicitly lays out what he meant by his assertion at *Tractatus* 2.1511 that a picture 'reaches right out to/reaches up to' (*reicht bis zu*) reality: 'by this I meant that the forms of the entities are contained in the form of the proposition which is about these entities' (SRLF p34). What he did not mean, then, is that the proposition determines (contains) in itself the identity of the fact it represents – two different entities (fact-components) may share a form.

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